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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the two 2001 issues of a newsletter of the Harvard Family Research Project, designed to share new ideas and experiences in evaluating systems reform and comprehensive child and family services. The first issue focuses on strategic communications and efforts of nonprofit agencies to evaluate strategic communication efforts and includes articles on the following topics: (1) using the media to build public will; (2) innovative ways for non-profits to build capacity for strategic communications; (3) engaging media partners to prevent teen pregnancy; (4) incorporating strategic communications in the KIDS COUNT project; (5) using the media as a tool for change; (6) how ethnic media challenge the usual perceptions of welfare reform; and (7) building a strategic communications plan. The second issue concerns the evaluation of after-school programs and out-of-school time, and includes articles on: (1) the contribution of developmental research; (2) descriptions of evaluations for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the CORAL Program, a 10-year initiative to improve academic achievement through out-of-school activities; (3) involving youth in evaluation and research; (4) designing and using logic models; and (5) initiating program evaluation in new programs. Each issue includes information on training opportunities and evaluation resources. (KB)

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The Evaluation Exchange: Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services, 2001.

Leslie Goodyear and Marielle Bohan-Baker, Editors

Volume VII, Number 1 - 2, 2001.

Harvard Family Research Project

2001

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the evaluation exchange

Harvard Family Research Project ■ Harvard Graduate School of Education ■ Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child & Family Services ■ Vol. VII, No. 1 ■ Winter 2001

from the director's desk

We all know how effective good advertising can be, for better or for worse. It can help us to make good consumer decisions or make us want french fries in spite of our New Year's resolution. But as one recent Boston subway campaign from the Horizons Initiative put it so well, "A cute kid on TV can get you to spend $900 on tires. Can one on a poster get you to spend two hours with homeless kids?"

Advertisements like this are an important element of strategic communications campaigns, asking audiences to think about the important issues that face families and children. As programs work to meet needs, achieve social change and influence policy, a strategic communications campaign is a critical means of educating the public about a problem and the specific ways in which they can invest in the solution, be it through volunteering two hours a week, writing a legislator a letter or buckling a seatbelt.

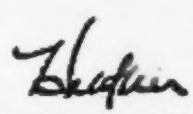
Strategic communications, as we understand it, encompasses a broad range of activities. Communications campaigns can include subway and television ads, grassroots organizing, coalition-building at the local and national levels, large-scale campaigns to change attitudes and behaviors, such as smoking, and strategies to build public will to increase investments in early care and education, just to name a few. We have discovered through our exploration that strategic communications and the related field of social marketing are too large to cover in one edition of a newsletter. Our goal is to articulate a vision for the integration of strategic communications and efforts to evaluate them into the work of nonprofits. This vision has been greatly enhanced by our interviews with prominent people in the field, including the contributors to this issue. We begin what we hope will be an ongoing conversation about the role and value of strategic communications by focusing this edition on important issues for programs to consider as they implement and evaluate strategic communications campaigns.

Our investigation shows that more and more nonprofits are struggling to develop strategic communications capacity and to use it as a tool to help achieve their service, public policy and fund raising goals. Just as there is a continuum of integration of evaluation into programs, there is a continuum for strategic communications. Evaluators have argued long and hard — and successfully — for the incorporation of evaluation from the outset of a program or initiative. Our conversations with those in the strategic communications field, such as Elizabeth Heid Thompson of Sutton Social Marketing, Pat Lewis of The Communications Network and Lori Dorfman of the Berkeley Media Studies Group, suggest that nonprofits and others increasingly understand the importance of inviting the strategic communications expert to the table, along with the evaluator, at the very first planning meetings.

With this comes the challenge of evaluating the contribution of the communications strategy components and of examining their value-added. As Elizabeth Heid Thompson pointed out, an evaluator who does not include the strategic communications aspect of the program or initiative misses many important means by which outcomes may be achieved. Efforts to address these challenges are in their infancy. It is our sense that the integration of evaluation efforts that provide information for planning and continuous improvement, as well as for assessment of impact, is critical to support and assess strategic communications work. Therefore, the articles in this issue range from the basics of how to use organizational learning to prepare for strategic communications planning and the ABCs of making a strategic plan to examples of large scale, complex research and coalition-building initiatives in which strategic communications is incorporated from the early planning stages.

This issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* is designed both to acquaint those less familiar with strategic communications with the framework and basic concepts, and for those more familiar, to describe an array of applications and campaigns within the child, youth and family arenas. We have also made a special effort to assemble for our readers some of the best resources for learning more about strategic communications in the New & Noteworthy section.

We will continue to explore the role of evaluation and value-added of strategic communications in efforts to inform and build public will to improve outcomes for children and families in future issues. Please give us your feedback on this issue and alert us to useful examples and resources to include in future ones.



Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D.
Founder & Director

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The Evaluation Exchange accepts contributions from policy makers, practitioners and researchers in evaluation and related fields. Contributions are welcome for regular *Evaluation Exchange* columns, as well as articles that highlight the training component of evaluation practice.

Please send a query letter outlining your proposed article to:

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> campaigns to watch

The California Wellness Foundation awards grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention programs throughout California, with general grantmaking centered around five priority areas: community health, population health improvement, teenage pregnancy prevention, violence prevention and work and health. Programs funded by the California Wellness Foundation include "Wellness Villages," broad-based neighborhood health improvement projects that solicit the interests of residents and local youth. Ten communities throughout California have each been awarded $1,050,000 for this initiative. For more information, contact: The California Wellness Foundation, 6320 Canoga Avenue, Suite 1700, Woodland Hills, CA 91367. **http://www.tcwf.org**

Connect for Kids is an award-winning project of the Benton Foundation, and its Web site targets adults - parents, grandparents, educators, policy makers and others - who want to become more active on behalf of kids in their communities. The Connect for Kids team is made up of children's experts, journalists and communications specialists who use the latest research on the status of children and studies in communications to provide timely information to interested adults. **http://www.connectforkids.org**

The Early Care and Education Collaborative is a multi-year project of five state-based child advocacy organizations and five national organizations working to design and implement public education strategies aimed at expanding the supply and quality of early care and education resources. **http://www.earlycare.org**

Fenton Communications is publishing *Communicating for Social Change*, an overview guide that walks through nine components that make up successful communications efforts. Fenton interviewed more than 40 communications experts and the guide includes quotes and case studies. *Communicating for Social Change* is sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation; copies will be available in late March, 2001. Groups interested in receiving a copy should e-mail Fenton through their Web site, or call 202-822-5200. **http://www.fenton.com**

The I Am Your Child campaign seeks to raise public awareness of the importance of the first three years of life and to increase the supply of and access to quality child development programs. Through state coalitions and partnerships with national organizations, the campaign provides information and resources on healthy youth development and school readiness. **http://www.iamyourchild.org**

A collaboration of Children's Defense Fund, the Children's Partnership and Children Now (CA), the **100% Campaign** is an effort to ensure that all of California's children obtain the health care coverage they need to grow up healthy and strong. The 100% Campaign conducts policy research and analysis and uses this information to develop a strategy for informing policy makers and advocates to develop effective system changes to health care coverage. **http://www.100percentcampaign.org**

Zero To Three promotes the healthy development of infants and toddlers by supporting and strengthening families, communities and those who work on their behalf. They communicate research and best practices, promote beneficial policies and practices and provide training, technical assistance and leadership development. Additionally, Zero To Three sponsored a 2000 survey of 3,000 adults and parents that measured their knowledge of child development. **http://www.zerotothree.org**

Special thanks to the following people who helped frame this issue of The Evaluation Exchange

Elaine Arkin, health communication consultant, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; **Lisa Deal**, program officer, David and Lucile Packard Foundation; **Lori Dorfman**, director, Berkeley Media Studies Group, Public Health Institute; **Elizabeth Heid Thompson**, vice president, Sutton Social Marketing; **Pat Lewis**, former director, The Communications Network; **Patricia Patrizi**, chair, Evaluation Roundtable and Improving the Practices of Philanthropy Project, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning; **Tom Reis**, venture philanthropy director, W.K. Kellogg Foundation; **David Smith**, senior vice president, Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns & Associates; **Phil Sparks**, vice president, Communications Consortium Media Center.

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Pitching Policy Change

In previous issues of *The Evaluation Exchange*, we have written about the development and evaluation of such complex projects as comprehensive community initiatives.[1] Many of these endeavors are developed with broad-based change in mind and may be both multi-site and multi-level. In this article, we present some of the challenges voiced by communications experts in interviews about the use and evaluation of mass media initiatives.

With growing demand for accountability and fierce competition for funding, nonprofit organizations and foundations are increasingly looking for ways to use information to their advantage. To a great extent, the capacity of social sector organizations to achieve their visions and goals lies in how effectively they communicate. Whether proposing a plan to a board of directors or initiating a large-scale media campaign, how programs and initiatives develop, package and deliver information impacts their chances of success. Hence, *strategic communications* has become an organizational function that is difficult to live without. Knowing that the media's influence is not likely to wane in the near future, we believe more work is needed to guide the development and evaluation of communications initiatives. Based on investigations into the literature and interviews with communications experts, this article presents our understanding of the role of strategic communications in nonprofits and the challenges faced by those charged with evaluating campaigns.

With a call for evaluation designs that foster learning among stakeholders and with the ever-present accountability demands that programs, evaluators and foundations face, the need for clear thinking on this topic has never been greater.

Frank Karel, vice president for communications at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, defines strategic communications as "the managed process by which information is produced and conveyed to achieve specific objectives vital to an organization's mission."[2] While this definition sounds simple, it encompasses a broad range of activities — from grassroots organizing and coalition-building to local and national campaigns using mass media to convey messages to the public. For the purposes of this article, we focus on the use of mass media initiatives to deliver public will-building messages and the importance of incorporating evaluation into the process of planning and implementing all aspects of a strategic communications campaign.

Most social sector organizations deliver more than just a service; they strive to improve people's lives. A social change mission is also at stake, requiring the use of communications strategies to generate public demand and increased investment in initiatives and programs. While it is indeed a challenge to produce and convey information that increases the likelihood that an organization's social change mission will be accomplished, even more complex is how that process and its intended effects in the political realm are evaluated.

Large scale strategic communications initiatives with a mass media component also reflect complexity in at least three ways. First, they often connect and integrate different types of activities that are required for broad-based change. Second, they operate within a context in which it is impossible to clearly link cause and effect. Last, and perhaps most importantly, strategic communications cannot be divorced from an organization's overall goals and objectives.

An example of this kind of complexity is the California Children and Families Commission (CCFC), which is responsible for the implementation of the California Children and Families First Act (Proposition 10) and is charged with implementing a systems-change strategy to ensure that children ages birth to five receive the services they need. In keeping with their mission, they have identified five sequential building blocks necessary to achieve their mission and goals.[3] Two of these building blocks, "Changing Public Awareness: Public Education and Outreach" and "Improving Public Policy: Policy Development and Advocacy," each have their own strategy but are not divorced from overall CCFC mission and goals.

Who Sets the Public Agenda?

During the early to mid-20th century, scholars such as Walter Lippman and Bernard Cohen pioneered the early thinking on what we now know as "agenda-setting." Lippman observed that the media give priority to certain issues over others, essentially acting as gatekeepers between the world's events and what the public actually sees. Furthermore, Cohen observed that the press was not necessarily adept at telling people what to think, yet was successful in telling people what they should think about, ultimately setting the public agenda.[4] Paul Lazersfeld demonstrated the impact of the media from another perspective, suggesting that the media often influence only a few opinion leaders or "elites" who, in turn, impart their knowledge to the public.[5]

Building on this base, a number of complex time series analyses have been conducted more recently that show that public opinion seems to follow, not lead, the agenda set by the press.[6] Moreover, experiments by Shanto Iyengar and David Kinder show that the public's concern about issues and the importance they assign to those issues follows quickly on the tail of the attention paid to those issues by the national media.[7]

But how often the media, and television news in particular, present an issue can and does have an impact on the attitudes and responses that are elicited from the public.[8] The more attention that the media pay to an issue or candidate, the more that issue is *primed*. How an issue is *framed* — the subtle differences in the presentation of a question, statement or problem that will elicit different responses and attitudes — also affects how people come to their opinions. The importance people attribute to social issues depends on a complex and subtle combination of elements, including problem and solution presentation and the identity of the message's deliverer.

While working to influence what lands on the *public* agenda requires a well-articulated and implemented strategy, those using the mass media to accomplish policy goals need to understand the factors that impact what lands on the *policy* agenda. The agenda-setting process is now thought to encompass media, public and policy agenda-setting.[9]

Although factors such as interest groups impact what ultimately appears on the policy agenda, evidence has shown that "public opinion is often a

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proximate cause of policy, affecting policy more than policy influences opinion."[10] Given that public opinion is such a strong predictor of policy makers' decision making, it is not surprising that mass media initiatives are used by organizations as a method to achieve their larger organizational goals. The powerful influence of the news media, particularly television news, provides the incentive to develop activities that will influence their coverage of issues. Yet the convergence of multiple factors that impact the ability to achieve desired outcomes can create complexity and confusion for those seeking to plan, implement and evaluate such initiatives.

Influencing the Public Agenda

Designing and Evaluating Mass Media Initiatives

Media campaigns aimed at changing certain attitudes and behaviors have shown some results; however, changes in public opinion and policy are a challenge to measure.[11] Although it is difficult to link cause and effect in the evaluation of mass media initiatives, it is important to invest in understanding the role that the initiatives play in shaping public will and policy.

Evaluators of mass media initiatives face significant challenges. Those engaging in projects aimed at influencing public will need to show that the investments made in strategic communications have been well spent while funders and their boards will want to know how media efforts contributed to larger institutional and programmatic goals. How can these initiatives be approached in a way that takes into account the many activities required, the multiple media channels used (news, advertising, entertainment) and the organizational and political contexts within which the initiative operates?

Articulating a Complex Strategy and its Outcomes

At a minimum, when considering a media initiative, it is critical to articulate why it is needed and what purpose it serves. Time should be taken at the outset to articulate what the strategy will be, including desired outcomes, how these outcomes and the initiative reflect and promote the mission of the organization, how key outcomes will be achieved and what contextual factors may impact that process.

Reflecting on our discussion of agenda-setting, a long-term goal, such as policy change or an increase in public investment, may take years to accomplish. In this era of accountability, there will undoubtedly be pressure to show results much earlier. Building a case along the way — with demonstrable and measurable intermediate outcomes — that strategic media interventions targeted at public opinion contributed to a change in public will and policy is key to demonstrating the value of mass media initiatives and strategic communications campaigns.

Therefore, knowing what outcomes are needed one year from now — intermediate outcomes — to make other outcomes possible two to five years out is an important aspect of developing a logical and coherent strategy. If the purpose of the mass media initiative is to ultimately increase public funding for a particular cause (long-term outcome), what must be accomplished in the interim to make that possible? Whose awareness needs to be raised? Which opinion leaders must be convinced of the validity of the cause? And how will these challenges affect an organization that is trying to accomplish these objectives?

Matching the Outcomes to the Mass Media Initiative Strategy

In evaluating complex mass media initiatives with multiple variables, there may be a tendency to go with the "usual suspects" in terms of outcomes, as suggested by communications expert Susan Bales, who raises the point that evaluators often tend to measure the "measurable." Counting messages delivered without clearly thinking through what the right outcomes and appropriate approaches are for measuring desired outcomes substitutes outputs for outcomes. These include outputs such as the number of op-eds placed in the paper or the number of pamphlets distributed. Although outputs may be important, they are not replacements for outcomes. Measuring process is important too; one useful approach may be to look at whether op-eds supported a reframing of the issue consistent with the initiative's mission.

Public opinion is a common outcome measured by evaluators of mass media initiatives. Before embarking on an evaluation procedure to measure public opinion, a critical question to ask is whether the mass media initiative is designed to make great shifts in public opinion on an issue or merely get the issue on the public agenda, providing information to encourage new ways to think about the issue. Which path the initiative chooses — moving public opinion or informing an audience — has significant implications for the specific goals, objectives and outcomes that are articulated early on, and, therefore, what outcomes are ultimately measured.

The issue of early care and education illustrates an approach that highlights how encouraging new ways of thinking about an issue can be used as a strategy to spur future investment. As seen in recent polls and as a result of being exposed to important findings from recent brain research, the public now acknowledges that learning begins at birth; the public does not, however, always connect these developmental findings with the need for quality early care and education. Furthermore, the public does not always support increases in early care and education funding if they perceive that funding will be shifted from primary school education.[12] Thus, strategists are now considering how to reframe the concept of early care and education so it is viewed as part of a continuum of learning that starts at birth and proceeds through elementary school. Strategists hope that, by connecting early care and education more closely with the concept of primary education, public support of increased investment for education during the birth to five age span will grow.

Applying Information During Planning and Implementation

With the strategy and outcomes articulated, the process of planning for and implementing a mass media initiative should acknowledge the value of applying research-generated information at the start of planning and during implementation with the help of the formative evaluation process. Overall, evaluating complex mass media initiatives and strategic communications campaigns is not very different from evaluating large, complex program and policy initiatives. As in any complex evaluation, it is important to be aware of the cycle of evaluation in which formative research — such as needs assessments or market research — leads to intervention design, which is accompanied and followed by evaluation and course correction and re-design for ongoing continuous improvement.

There is much to be learned from those in the field who are implementing communications initiatives as well as from the different approaches to evaluation that have been applied to other complex initiatives. With a call for evaluation designs that foster learning among stakeholders, and with the ever-present accountability demands that programs, evaluators and foundations face, the need for clear thinking on this topic has never been greater. ■

Marielle Bohan-Baker, HFRP research associate

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How can organizations build capacity to engage in strategic communications campaigns? Jacqueline Dugery of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change offers some innovative ways to build on organizational learning.

Coming of Age *in the* Information Age

We live in an information age that is set to transform the prospects of communities. In-boxes, both real and virtual, overflow with research from think tanks, foundations, national organizations and university research centers about "what works" to build strong communities. Packaged in various shapes and sizes — reports, newsletters, issue briefs, how-to guides — such information creates knowledge and builds the capacity of nonprofit practitioners to develop and strengthen their organizations and programs. On any given day, the following may cross a nonprofit practitioner's desk: a report on evaluation findings that suggests a new program design or intervention; a Web site featuring current information on a specific field to keep practitioners abreast of new developments, trends and possible grant opportunities; and issue briefs that synthesize recent research in a particular area. The link between knowledge and practice is clear.

Perhaps less obvious is the potential of fusing information and knowledge gathering with an organization's strategic communications work. In fact, both are essential precursors to any communications effort. Deliberately integrating knowledge with fundraising, marketing, community awareness campaigns and membership recruitment efforts will yield significant dividends for an organization's communications efforts. However, simply increasing quantity and accessibility of information is no guarantee that those seeking knowledge can find it and find it useful. Accessing, absorbing and applying information require considerable investments of time — something that is often in short supply in the nonprofit practitioner community.

To understand the process of knowledge creation, the Pew Partnership for Civic Change launched a series of focus groups with nonprofit practitioners from San Antonio, Texas, St. Louis, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, to sharpen our understanding of how this group accesses the information they need to enhance their programs. Specifically, we wanted to know:

- Current learning approaches and activities of the nonprofit sector
- How nonprofits create, manage and apply knowledge
- Preferred ways nonprofits receive information
- What nonprofits want to become better learners

Findings

Several key findings from the focus groups provide a snapshot of the challenges facing the nonprofit practitioner trying to manage the latest information while also providing quality services and keeping the lights on.

- Nonprofit practitioners are struggling, often in isolation, against a dizzying glut of information. They are surrounded by masses of useful information but day-to-day activities preclude them from tapping into it. Stacks of unread reports, articles, and listserv messages stimulate a nagging sense of inadequacy about their work. Frustration builds when practitioners know that the information that they need is out there but do not know how to get to it quickly.
- Most nonprofits have not integrated a systematic learning process into their organizations' culture to deal with information. Instead, they rely on "periodic learning" — a hybrid of continuous and just-in-time learning. Periodic learning rarely targets long-term issues or challenges facing the organization.
- For most nonprofits, direct one-on-one contact with someone they trust — usually other nonprofit practitioners and parent organizations — is the preferred method of accessing needed information. Low on the list were conferences and workshop training, except for networking "hallway conversations."
- Learning is often equated exclusively with organizational development and basic program evaluation issues. Nonprofits focus their scarce learning time on issues such as strategic planning, board development and fundraising and struggle in their efforts to develop better data collection processes and measurement tools. Rarely did practitioners find time to invest in learning how to develop new programs and strategies so that their organization could continue to fulfill its mission.

For those who create and disseminate information for the nonprofit sector, these findings may suggest a dismal picture — practitioners overwhelmed by day-to-day work and often unable to ferret out and apply the information they need to deliver services. However, the focus group participants were eager to both acknowledge the inefficiencies in their learning processes and suggest solutions. Two potential solutions — a knowledge broker and a learning collaborative — were developed by focus group participants.

Knowledge Broker

High on the wish list for practitioners is a trustworthy local source who can open doors to the best-known and most current information — a knowledge broker. The knowledge broker's role would be similar to that of an agricultural extension agent. As the client, the practitioner would set the learning agenda, identify how the agenda fits into the organization's short- and long-term goals, articulate the organization's strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis learning and identify viable strategies for disseminating information within the organization once received. The broker's role would be to sort through, synthesize and translate information tailored to the interests and needs of the organization. Success would rely on the ability of the practitioner and broker to develop a process that supports continual — rather than piecemeal and erratic — learning. By reacting specifically to the interests identified by the organization, the knowledge broker ensures that the information is relevant to the organization.

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> promising practices

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Who would these knowledge brokers be and where would they come from? For starters, they would be experts in a particular issue, such as youth development or media communications, adept at accessing and delivering a range of research on a particular topic in a timely manner. On the soft-skills side, they would also be trained to develop long-term relationships with nonprofit practitioners. Frequent visits and regular phone contact would ensure that the brokers develop sensitivity to organizations' operating environment, taking into account their time constraints, budget issues and community contexts. An organization interested in amplifying their message to constituents might, for example, consider a knowledge broker with media relations skills. Depending on the organization's needs, the broker might suggest specific vehicles for a message, develop a framework for researching key audiences and identify possible tools for tracking the impact of selected communication strategies. The value of the broker rests on his or her ability to synthesize and translate information for the practitioner in a way that efficiently captures and transfers knowledge.

In all likelihood, every community already has formal or informal knowledge brokers. Possible sources for knowledge brokers might include local universities or colleges, retired nonprofit practitioners, independent consultants or foundations. Practitioners could also be encouraged to consider the "unusual suspects"— those not traditionally tapped by their community. Our focus group participants indicated that the private sector and local government agencies are often underutilized resources.

Learning Collaborative

The second suggestion raised by the focus group participants was a learning collaborative or learning team. The collaborative would consist of individuals from within the same organization or a cross-section of individuals from different organizations. In contrast to the knowledge broker, the responsibility for learning would be shared by each member. This strategy is hardly revolutionary. In the medical profession, for example, residents often convene regularly to discuss recent research findings. Members take responsibility for synthesizing and presenting one professional journal article to the group, obviating the need for each individual to read every article that crosses his or her desk. For instance, a collaborative may develop a learning agenda that focuses on effective media campaigns. One member might be responsible for identifying several examples of successful public awareness campaigns while another may focus on how to identify the most appropriate vehicle for the message and yet another may be charged with summarizing methodologies for evaluating a media campaign.

There are several components that point to the viability of a successful learning collaborative. First, there is a built-in incentive for members to participate. Second, meetings are regularly scheduled and are considered "part of doing business." Third, the collaborative is doing more than updating colleagues on recent activities — it aims at specific and longer-term learning.

The potential for introducing knowledge brokers and learning collaboratives would address several of the challenges raised by nonprofit practitioners by introducing a regular, methodical learning process and focus to the nonprofit organization. Through synthesis and sharing, practitioners would be able to maximize their learning time and both meet their desire for personal contact and receive tailored support from a trusted source. Collaborations and knowledge brokers would help break the isolation that nonprofit practitioners often operate in, particularly when it comes to learning, and both hold promise for decreasing the frustration that comes from not being able to access needed information. A final added benefit is a likely increase in practitioners' sense of efficacy and control.

With support from their stakeholders – board members, funders, and other practitioners in their communities – nonprofit organizations are poised to do more than just harness the information age. They are willing and enthusiastic learners ready to *come of age*.

Introducing these concepts would be neither quick nor simple. Both money and time would be required, as would a change in practitioners' mindset. We know that organizations, when faced with the choice, opt for doing rather than analyzing. However, with support from their stakeholders — board members, funders, and other practitioners in their communities — nonprofit organizations are poised to do more than just harness the information age. They are willing and enthusiastic learners ready to *come of age*.

This article is based on a report, *Coming of Age in the Information Age*. It is available to download from the Pew Partnership for Civic Change Web site, www.pew-partnership.org. Copies may be requested from mail@pew-partnership.org or (804) 971-2073. ■

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NCPTP director Sarah Brown describes the unique way in which the Campaign has enlisted the support of "unusual suspects" in its efforts to improve child well-being and reduce child poverty.

Engaging the Media as Partners in Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Despite recent encouraging declines, the rates of teen pregnancy and birth in this country remain very troubling. Every year, almost one million teenage girls become pregnant, with four in ten girls experiencing at least one pregnancy before age 20. The teen pregnancy and birth rates in the United States are the highest of any fully industrialized nation. Simply put, too many young people are having babies they are ill-prepared to raise — a burden that limits their ability to participate fully in American life and places their children at greater risk from the beginning.

THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY

With this sobering backdrop, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy was organized in 1996 by a diverse group of individuals who concluded that reducing the nation's rate of teen pregnancy was one of the most strategic and direct means available to improve child well-being and reduce persistent child poverty. In an effort to provide a benchmark against which progress could be measured, the Campaign set a specific goal of reducing the teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. by one-third by 2005. To achieve its objectives, the Campaign adopted a two part strategy: (1) Building a more coordinated and effective grassroots movement by working with states and local communities and (2) influencing cultural values and messages by working with the entertainment media, parents, faith communities, teens and others.

Campaign Strategy

The first strategy centers on working with people in states and communities. We provide research and data they can use in their programs or coalitions and direct technical assistance through site visits and regional conferences. We give them new ideas and contacts and help them find effective ways to reduce teen pregnancy in their unique settings. The second strategy is more visible and highly-leveraged, involving a broad scale effort to influence social norms primarily through the entertainment media viewed by teens and their parents. Our rationale for targeting the entertainment media is based on a straightforward idea: no small non-profit group — or even large non-profit — will ever have the resources to communicate its core ideas powerfully and frequently enough to its target audiences through the usual method of programs and pamphlets. The problem of teen pregnancy is simply too big and diverse. Therefore, enlisting the help of entertainment media is essential to conveying important ideas often to an audience that is paying close attention.

It's fine to work with states and communities to make their efforts more research-based, more media savvy, more tolerant of differing views and diverse in the types of remedies offered. But doing so will be a hollow exercise if the entire culture, especially popular teen culture, is sending kids messages that getting pregnant at a young age is no big deal, that having sex rarely has consequences and that parents can't do anything about their children's sexual attitudes and behavior. Although the media cannot solve the problem of teen pregnancy alone, we know that we can't solve it without them.

The Campaign's Approach and Organization

The Campaign's overall approach at both the national and local levels is distinctive. We are non-ideological and have worked hard to reduce the conflict that too often has impeded action on this issue. Second, we rely extensively on high-quality research to inform everything we do. And third, we are working in highly-leveraged ways with some of the most powerful individuals and organizations in the country to change young people's lives.

The Campaign's organization is also unique. In the five years since it was established, the National Campaign has assembled a distinguished Board of Directors, many of whom might fairly be seen as "outsiders" in the world of adolescent reproductive health (i.e. John E. Pepper, Chairman, Board of Directors, Procter & Gamble Company, Stephen W. Sanger, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, General Mills, Inc., and Bruce Rosenblum, Executive Vice President, Television, Warner Brothers). This diverse Board reflects the Campaign's strong belief that, if this country is to make real progress in reducing rates of adolescent pregnancy, we must involve more than just the "usual suspects."

Additionally, the Campaign has:

- maintained bipartisan leadership groups in both the House and Senate with equal numbers of republicans and democrats on each panel;
- established a Youth Leadership Team to foster greater involvement of youth in teen pregnancy prevention on a national level and in communities and to ensure that teen voices are reflected in the Campaign's programs and messages; and
- enjoyed the support of four advisory groups' "task forces" made up of 75 leaders in the areas of media, research, religion and public values, and state and local action.

The Campaign's Media Program

Our media programs are centered on helping the entertainment media to be part of the solution to high levels of teen pregnancy. Our goal is to integrate prevention messages into the popular media as a way to reinforce the messages that young people are hearing in local prevention programs, in schools and from their parents — and, in some cases, as a way to introduce the topic to those who may not hear about it any other way. We know from public opinion polling and other research that, although teens prefer to hear about sex and pregnancy prevention from their parents, they most often learn about it from the media. While entertainment media leaders do not see themselves as teachers, many do understand the enormous potential they have to educate, deliver helpful messages and shape behavior.

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> promising practices

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Since the Campaign's beginning, the number of media partners with whom we work has increased exponentially. We estimate that, since the Campaign's inception, we have worked with more than 53 media partners and are actively working with 27 of them. We believe that the primary reason for this growth is that we offer a variety of messages about preventing teen pregnancy — from encouraging abstinence among young teens to offering frank advice about contraception to showcasing good parent-child communication. We also work hard to find new and interesting angles on the issue so that we remain relevant in their view. Most importantly, our solid grounding in research and the inclusion of teenagers' views and voices keeps what we are doing fresh and interesting to our media partners. They, in turn, deliver the information to their audiences through their programs, magazines, and Web sites in their own style, language and format.

Although the media cannot solve the problem of teen pregnancy alone, we know we can't solve it without them.

The primary way we engage media leaders is to offer briefings to key editors, script writers, and producers. We gain access to these key people through introductions arranged by members of the Campaign's media task force and board. These briefings are carefully tailored for the specific show or magazine meeting with us. Such sessions are typically followed by additional informal communication as the writers develop ideas, ask questions and need data. Over the past three years, we held 62 briefings for individual shows and magazines; these have resulted in our messages appearing in programs and magazines that reach more than 250 million viewers and readers nationwide. For example, *Teen People*, a top-rated teen magazine with a circulation of eight million teens per month and our partner since its inception in 1998, has run six editorial features on issues related to teen pregnancy in 2000 alone. The magazine's November, 2000, issue, for example, featured the winners of our second annual public service advertising contest for teens, and winning entries were made into postcards and distributed nationwide. In June, *Teen People* editors hosted the opening session of our Youth Leadership Team meeting and in May, the magazine included an excerpt from *Voices Carry*, a Campaign publication that the magazine's 7000 teen "trendspotters" helped develop. In its year-end issue, *Teen People* identified teen pregnancy as *the* top issue of 2000.

Although influencing the content of media will continue to comprise the majority of the Campaign's media work, with the help of Ogilvy & Mather, a worldwide leader in advertising, we have developed a number of public service announcements that serve to draw attention to the issue, reinforce the messages in the content of other media, make teen pregnancy more relevant to those segments of teens and adults who are not thinking about it, and give the Campaign a useful, creative tool for communicating with young people, in particular, in language that resonates with them.

The Campaign's new PSA campaign for teens, *Sex Has Consequences*, was launched nationwide in October, 2000, with ads developed by Ogilvy & Mather that are part of an overall effort to last for the next three- to five years. The first phase of this effort is a hard-hitting series of print ads that reach teens in familiar language, with a peer-to-peer perspective, in a non-judgmental and realistic way. Rather than offering more information about how to avoid pregnancy, our PSAs aim to reach teens at the deepest emotional level, to motivate them to *want* to prevent pregnancy. Our intent was to create something different, bolder and more direct than other ad campaigns on teen pregnancy prevention have been. These ads cut through the clutter of the teen media environment and get the attention of young people who often do not have pregnancy prevention on their minds at all. While somewhat controversial among adults, the ads have tested extremely well among teen boys and girls from a variety of ethnic, economic, and geographic backgrounds in formal and informal focus groups, as well as with our Youth Leadership Team. In extensive focus group testing of the concepts and executions, young people affirmed that these ads accomplish our goal: sparking conversations among teens about the consequences of sex and helping them consider reasons to avoid pregnancy. Samples may be viewed on the Campaign's Web site (see below).

The Ad Council has distributed the ads to its list of 8,000 magazines and newspapers with information on how the publications can place the ads *pro bono*. Several teen publications, including *Teen People*, *MH-18*, *The Source*, *Cosmo Girl*, *Vibe*, and *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, are providing free placements in their publications. The ads have also been featured on several websites including Zaphealth.com, Ricki.com, and Oxygen Media's network of sites. Postcard versions of the ads have also been distributed nationwide in Tower Record stores and on 75 college campuses.

Future Campaign Evaluation

An important part of the Campaign's future is to evaluate the impact of its work. From the beginning, it has been interested in continuously assessing whether it is making a difference. To this end, the Campaign collects performance measures for each organizational program area on a quarterly basis. We also collect feedback on specific activities within program areas such as our regional technical assistance conferences, and our new public service advertisements (currently being evaluated). In addition, through our ongoing relationship with the Harvard Business School (which recently prepared a case study about the Campaign) and our growing relationship with McKinsey and Company's new nonprofit consulting branch, the Campaign continues to be at the forefront of nonprofits attempting to evaluate their work. ■

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Using an integrated self-assessment evaluation design, KIDS COUNT has incorporated strategic communications into its long-term vision to improve child well-being.

KIDS COUNT Self-Assessment

Bridging Evaluation with Strategic Communication of Data on Children & Families

In 1990, the Annie E. Casey Foundation embarked on the KIDS COUNT initiative to measure, state by state, the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children and families using the best available data. KIDS COUNT began at the national level with the annual production of the *KIDS COUNT Data Book*. In 1991, the Foundation began supporting state-level projects. The network of state level KIDS COUNT projects now includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

KIDS COUNT is more than numbers – it is about strategically communicating data to ensure that credible, reliable information provides the basis for informed decision-making about children and families. As such, state-level KIDS COUNT projects have made important contributions to the field of child well-being and to the evolution of data-based advocacy. Throughout the country, KIDS COUNT data are credited with influencing significant policy decisions to improve the condition of kids and families.

But how do we know the true impact that KIDS COUNT data have on decision-making for children and families?
In order to answer this question, the KIDS COUNT Network embarked on a process of Self-Assessment to review the internal functioning of each state-level project and evaluate the impact of that work on improving the lives of children and families. Underlying the entire effort is the principle of learning — if we learn more about what we do, how we do it, and the effects of our work, then we can become more effective and efficient communicators and better generate our desired outcomes.

Self-Assessment: Evaluation of choice for KIDS COUNT
In 1999, a Self-Assessment working group was formed, comprised of volunteers from the KIDS COUNT Network. Innovation Network, Inc. (InnoNet), an evaluation consulting firm in Washington, D.C., was hired to work with the group as it developed and implemented the Self-Assessment process. Throughout the evolution of this process, members of the KIDS COUNT Network have been involved, advising InnoNet on development and serving as pilot testers for each instrument and tool created. The full Network has been consulted at various junctures to ensure buy-in from the whole.

KIDS COUNT Self-Assessment includes two parts: a process and an outcome evaluation. This was important because, in order to understand and measure each project's outcomes and impact, the projects must better understand how they operate internally and how they might improve.

Assessing the capacity and internal structures of KIDS COUNT work
For the process evaluation, a tool was developed to assess the capacity and internal structures of each project. The tool examined standard KIDS COUNT components: data collection and analysis, communications and dissemination, policy analysis, community and constituency mobilization and fund development/ sustainability. Status indicators are used to examine the activities within each component. Even though projects vary in structure, size and budget, the tool was constructed to accommodate the diversity within the Network.

The process evaluation tool is, in large part, a work plan document. As such, after each activity is assessed, projects use an *Action Steps* page to articulate the major challenges and solutions for items rated less than outstanding. By including the *Action Steps* page in the tool, projects are able to plan for improvements and changes rather than merely acknowledging areas for growth. For many KIDS COUNT projects, this process tool allows them to easily report their work and future plans to funders.

The process tool was successfully pilot-tested with 11 KIDS COUNT projects in December, 1999, and was rolled out to the full Network in February, 2000. By the end of 2000, 40 projects completed the process evaluation tool, actively using their results to implement improvements. Each process tool was analyzed by InnoNet, given an individual report and provided with a variety of ways to understand project specific results. While individual project results are confidential, aggregate results are compiled and reviewed by the Network and the Annie E. Casey Foundation to determine areas for technical assistance and training.

The most innovative feature of the process tool is the database of "thinking points" which help guide, rather than dictate, the direction of KIDS COUNT projects as they improve activities identified in their *Action Steps* pages. The "thinking points," phrased as questions, are derived from success stories within the Network and are intended to help frame potential improvements and solutions.

The responses to the process evaluation are encouraging. One KIDS COUNT project noted that the Self-Assessment helped identify weakness in the area of media communications, which was remedied by the hiring

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> questions & answers

A conversation with

Susan Nall Bales

Susan Bales is president of the FrameWorks Institute, a Washington, D.C. based nonprofit that conducts communications research on social issues, helping advocates apply research to public education campaigns. She and her colleagues at the Institute have been instrumental in developing strategic frame analysis, a new approach to communications research and practice. Prior to her work at FrameWorks, Bales served as director of strategic communications and children's issues at the Benton Foundation for six years and as VP for communications at the National Association of Children's Hospitals for four years. Bales also founded the Coalition for America's Children. A graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles, Bales received her MA degree from Middlebury College.

Q **What is strategic frame analysis and how does it fit into an overall strategic communications approach?**

A I think doing communications strategically means recognizing that you come into an environment where people already have ways of understanding an issue, whether as a result of the way media framed it, from personal communication, or from cultural models that developed over time. You don't just walk out the door one day and say, "I have an issue that I want people to consider." It's important to understand that *the way* people already perceive an issue is part of what you may be up against.

And so, step number one is to identify what people already bring to the conversation that you want to have with them; and secondly, to consider the implications of the way they understand an issue for their policy preferences.

The other important part of strategic communications is to bring a little bit more social science into the art of communications. And that means understanding that strategic communications is about three principles: agenda-setting, framing and priming. It's about whether your issue is on the public agenda and how the media participates in putting it on or off the public agenda; how the nature of the way the issue is framed by the media either contributes to or impedes your getting it on the public agenda; and finally, whether your issue becomes a lens through which people evaluate candidates for public office or how other issues can serve as a useful lens on your issue.

I think that those three principles — agenda-setting, framing and priming — that come out of the social science literature are absolutely pivotal for advocates to understand as they approach communication. We teach them in our trainings so that advocates have a vocabulary for, and a sensibility to, the processes of communication.

Q **How does strategic framing fit in?**

A Well, framing is a concept that runs through the cognitive, social and behavioral sciences. For the work that my colleagues and I do, it allows us to bridge the differences among these various disciplines that study communications and policy preference, but have done so in isolation from each other. So, the great thing about the concept of framing is that, whether you're looking through the literature of anthropology, psychology, political science, linguistics or sociology, people have studied framing, and so it's a core concept.

Essentially, framing has to do with the way an issue is composed: the messengers, visuals and metaphors that are used to convey an idea. The cues that are given to people by the framing direct their reasoning about issues. Given this, it is vital that advocates understand the composition of the frame and what kinds of meta-messages or world views it calls into play. What we have tried to do in our work is to break down that frame; to deconstruct it and show people that, when you're talking about making news, you have a number of different variables you can manipulate. It's not just the message, it's the visual, metaphors and colorful language that are used. You can tell a story in many different ways and the more you know about which elements help and hurt your cause, the better you will be at telling a story about social policy.

You can tell a story in many different ways - the more you know about which elements help and hurt your cause, the better you will be at telling a story about social policy.

Strategic frame analysis is really something that has been invented in the last five years by a group of communications scholars and practitioners getting together to compare the way that they look at communications. I would cite as part of that team, Frank Gilliam, with the Center for Communications and Community at UCLA; Meg Bostrum, a political strategist and public opinion expert, linguists George Lakoff at UC/Berkeley and Pamela Morgan, and Joseph Grady and Axel Aubrun, co-founders of Cultural Logic.

In my own work, as someone who's run communications campaigns for twenty-five years, I've tried to go back and develop a conversation between the various academic disciplines that ask how people think about social issues. I've added a more applied question, however: how can we change the communication in such a way that people will take another look at social problems? The result is strategic frame analysis, which is based in both theory and practice and attempts to continue that dialogue.

Q **What are some examples of methods used in strategic frame analysis?**

A Traditionally, people have invested in focus groups or surveys to answer these questions. We like to use a technique called "elicitations," which we find more useful in the early stages of an investigation. These are one-on-one interviews that allow people to talk about an issue while analysts look not so much for opinions as for the kind of models that they bring into the discussion to make sense of a particular issue. In talking about foreign policy, for example, do people really reason off of a "neighbor model"? In thinking about child care, do people see the day care center

as an environment or a container?

Secondly, you have to understand the mediators, the places where people get their information on social issues. Increasingly, it's from local TV news. Understanding how the media tends to look at your issues is really important, and that doesn't take a lot of money to do. You know, you can do a pretty good content analysis by farming it out to people in your coalition and watching news for a week, taping it, and looking at how your issue plays out, if it's visible in any way. Or, following the work of the Center for Media and Public Affairs (www.cmpa.com) which tracks the media presentations of many social issues. I think any serious communicator on social issues should subscribe to their *Media Monitor*.

Our content analyses document the dominant frames of news coverage. But it's at this point, I think, that many people make a tactical mistake by attempting to mimic the news. They think, "If we could just get more news," or, "if we could just get our spin inserted into that news, we'd be winning." Instead, what you want to do is figure out how the dominant frames of news coverage are likely to affect public opinion and how you can change as many variables in the frame in order to get out a new message that is more likely to set up different policy preferences.

So we experiment with different elements of the frame and we manipulate those elements in experiments that Frank Gilliam conducts at UCLA. If you start using, for example, police officers to talk about early childhood education, or if you start using older people to talk about youth, will you get a different policy outcome? If you use the backdrop of the state capital to talk about children's oral health, will you cause people to say, "Wait a second. What does policy have to do with this? Why is this a legislative issue?"

Our methodology is divided between techniques we use to study and categorize the dominant frames that are currently affecting public understanding on a given issue, and then another set of techniques to determine whether our hypothetical "reframes" actually set up different policy choices. In essence, we've reconfigured the traditional investigation of "message" and added a number of new methods.

Q **In recent years, we have seen personal stories used to emotionally impact audiences, with the intent of spurring policy change. Could you explain the difference between this approach to communications, which you define as episodic, and the more thematic approach? What kinds of policy results are achieved through each approach?**

A Our perspective on this point owes a great deal to the work of Shanto Iyengar at Stanford University.

The critical point is whether you can insert into the discussion of any given issue some contextualization, something that broadens the frame so that it isn't a single episode about a single person and a single trouble that afflicts them, which does not lead to public policy solutions.

In the content analyses we've done lately on children's and youth issues over a six-week period, 97% of the coverage was episodic. What that means is that the coverage told the story of individual episodes that happened to individuals. These stories make no connection to causes or to consequences of those events.

So for a viewer that is not familiar with a particular social problem, what you see is a parade of individual stories that may be regrettable or might make you feel like somebody should do something. But it is more likely that you will write a check to a charity, if you do anything at all, and less likely that you will make the connection to policies that affect the conditions by which personal choices are constrained.

Alternatively, a thematic story looks at trends across time. It connects a current situation to what came before it, or it forecasts consequences. It tells a story in terms of the environment surrounding the person. It makes a link between conditions. And it helps people understand causality and the systems that determine outcomes.

So, for example, just to boil this down to essence, an episodic story would be about a violent child. A thematic story would be about the conditions in a neighborhood and what was available to a child other than violence. On this point, we have written a guide for advocates, outlining how to tell social policy stories in a different way, one that puts individuals in context and connects them to their environment.

Q **When developing a message, how important is it to connect the particular problem to a possible solution?**

A Oh, absolutely important. Because one of the problems we see, and this is especially true of children's issues, is that people are firmly convinced that children are in trouble in America. But they don't think that there's anything that can be done about it, and they cannot name a single, positive solution to a children's problem that isn't about "fixing the parents." They can't come up with a community that did something positive. And in fact, when you put in front of them, as we have in focus groups, examples of a problem that was solved, or a community that came together to tackle a problem, they love these kinds of stories!

I mean, it is an eye-opener, and it's very energizing to people to know that others are getting together and making some progress. There's some recent research that suggests that people really have a hard time identifying problems. They're better at coming up with solutions, once you've identified a problem for them. But they have a hard time being able to identify the problem itself. And so, the challenge in the frame is to help us orient the problem in such a way that the solution is inherent in it; that the systemic solution or the policy solution is set up because, without that prompt, the "default frame" is to fix the individual. ■

Marielle Bohan-Baker, HFRP, research associate

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> evaluations to watch

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of two contractors with significant media relations experience who will develop a strategic communications plan for the organization and assist with the release of upcoming publications. Another project said, "The self-assessment tool has been enormously helpful to us. It has given us creative ideas that will improve our program. Our overall project is better integrated and more comprehensive as a result."

Assessing outcomes and impacts of KIDS COUNT work

Clearly, the answer to the overarching question – **What is the impact that KIDS COUNT data have on improving the lives of children and families?** – is largely dependent upon the outcomes part of the Self-Assessment, currently in development. After a thorough search of the literature, a framework was designed to measure the impact of data-based advocacy on various constituent groups. When complete, projects will be able to measure and understand how the strategic communication of data on children is influencing decision-making on behalf of kids and families.

The outcomes evaluation will be structured differently from the process evaluation. Every KIDS COUNT project will be given a core module of evaluation questions, indicators and a set of collection instruments with instructions on how to gather the information needed to measure the indicators. For the more well-developed projects, there will be additional modules so they may obtain more in-depth information about the impact of their work. In the future, the entire Self-Assessment process will be Web-based.

Without a doubt, the outcomes evaluation is the more challenging aspect of the Self-Assessment. Unlike evaluations of direct service agencies, measuring the impact of an indirect service is a formidable task. And yet, KIDS COUNT projects recognize that the benefits are significant. If the projects can gain a concrete understanding of how the various users of KIDS COUNT data perceive and value their data and information, it can contribute significantly toward better targeting of their data and communications efforts.

The KIDS COUNT Network embarked on this Self-Assessment process to learn how to be more efficient and effective in their work. They continue to strive for excellence and to increase the ways in which data are used to advocate on behalf of children and families. In the end, the more KIDS COUNT data are utilized in policy making, community planning, and program delivery, the greater the likelihood that the lives of children and families will be improved. ■

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covering Kids™

Outcome Evaluation Proves Campaign Value

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded *Covering Kids* strategic communications campaign is an example of how, with sufficient support and comprehensive planning, a strategic communications campaign can be strengthened by using a research and evaluation framework.

The media campaign is a part of the larger *Covering Kids* coalition-building effort to increase enrollment in the SCHIP (children's health insurance) program by decreasing institutional barriers and simplifying the enrollment process for eligible families. The campaign was guided by a basic question: How can we motivate eligible families to apply for this insurance? This in mind, the strategic communications team at Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns & Associates, Inc. planned a comprehensive communications approach including paid advertising, earned media and grassroots enrollment events. Research and evaluation to support this approach, conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide for the Foundation, included formative research — interviews with eligible families and a national survey — and outcome evaluation to test the effects in six pilot and two comparison media markets. The process serves as a model for how strategic communications can be integrated into larger organizational goals and activities, including framing objectives, coalition-building, mass media initiatives, evaluation and continuous improvement.

For example, the formative research found that a majority — 60% — of the target population did not realize their eligibility to enroll in Medicaid or SCHIP, but more than 80% said they would enroll in the program if they could. This understanding of the target audience and the primary barriers to enrollment guided the research team's planning for message development.

Initiation of the campaign, through staged press conferences and media saturation, was linked to a peak outreach time — back to school. In conjunction with message delivery, the campaign worked with the local *Covering Kids* coalitions to increase the level of activity in local areas through additional outreach and enrollment events. The *Covering Kids* messages were delivered via print, radio and television media.

The point of action for the target audience was to call the national hotline (1-800-KIDS NOW) to get enrollment information. Outcome evaluation started with measuring hotline calls across time to identify whether there were increased numbers of calls during the campaign period. In one target market there were 75% more hotline calls in the campaign period than in the same period the year before, and in another the hotline was ringing off the hook, with a whopping 700% increase in calls. To understand what prompted hotline callers to call, the evaluation team called back hotline callers and asked how they found out about the program and whether they planned to enroll. They found that 90% of callers said they had seen the advertisements, and 82% planned to apply to enroll. In addition, pre- and post-campaign target audience telephone surveys in the test and comparison markets found that awareness of the SCHIP program increased among eligible families. Although increasing SCHIP awareness and prompting eligible families to call were the most direct intended outcomes for the communication campaign, data on application requests and new enrollment also are being analyzed to identify whether increases over other periods occurred.

Based on the evaluation findings, *Covering Kids* plans to make a second pass at advertising in the same markets in addition to continued coalition building, media tracking and measurement of long term impact. They also plan to expand to two new markets, testing a radio-only campaign in those markets. ■

For more information about this initiative, contact **David Smith** at Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns & Associates, Inc., 1660 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 850 Washington, DC 20007; 202.338.8300, tel; 202.338.2334, fax

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> beyond basic training

The Media
A Tool for Change?

Taj James gives examples of how, through the activities of Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, young people were empowered to use the media to achieve their organizing goals.

In an information economy, access to and control over media messages is critical. If knowledge is power, then the production and distribution of ideas and information are the tools to transform that power into positive change. For groups supporting youth empowerment, we must ask: How can we put these powerful tools to work to produce, analyze, and control information so that power ultimately resides in the hands of young people?

At Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth we are answering that question. Coleman's youth leadership group, Youth Making a Change (Y-MAC), is a youth-organizing council of diverse, low-income high school students who work to organize their peers to impact local public policy. Y-MAC's efforts to use the media to promote its campaigns provide instructive lessons on successful strategic communications. Following are some key principles we found to support youth as they transformed the media into a tool for positive change.

■ **Get support from the experts.** Just like any other aspect of an organizational strategy, a media strategy needs to be rooted in a framework. Our media strategies have been developed with the support of a group called *We Interrupt this Message*, a national intermediary that trains youth and community groups in strategic media. *We Interrupt* helps youth groups study the media and analyze bias as a way of directly challenging anti-youth bias. They train the youth in Y-MAC, and many other groups in the youth movement, on basic public relations skills — how to write a press release, how to talk to reporters. But more importantly, *We Interrupt* helps groups understand media bias so they can develop a winning message that challenges stereotypes around youth, race and poverty.

■ **A strong communications strategy and message depend on a clear organizing goal.** Many groups try to work with the media only to discover that their campaign goals are unclear. Developing a clear organizing strategy is essential to the creation of a successful media campaign. Who is really responsible for the problem? What can be done to fix it? Who has the power to do that? A good message puts all those things together into a sound bite or press release.

An example from Y-MAC
When Y-MAC conducted their own evaluation of city-funded youth centers, they initially planned to publish a report card ranking each with a letter grade from A to F. This tactic was based on a strategy used by Coleman's parent organizing group, Parent Advocates for Youth (PAY). Stories of the PAY report cards in the local newspaper led to politicians and parks administrators acting to address the problems and prompted local residents to take act on behalf of their beleaguered local parks.

Y-MAC initially thought that using this strategy would spark rapid change and force youth centers to be held accountable. On reflection, however, Y-MAC reconsidered its goals: was it trying to force these agencies to change in the short term or did it want a solution that would lead to youth participation and accountability in the long run? Y-MAC changed its media strategy and decided to publish results, but withhold the names of the youth centers evaluated because it realized that the real target was not the individual agencies but the city for not making sure youth were participating and involved in the evaluation. Y-MAC shifted their demands to require, as a condition of funding, that the city mandate that all city-funded youth programs involve youth in program planning and evaluation. This demand allowed Y-MAC to get media attention for its report while also getting political and popular support for the proposed policy from the evaluated agencies. The campaign was a success and, this year, the city's department of Children Youth and Families hired 60 youth to evaluate its funded programs.

■ **Reframe the problem and offer a solution.** Often, our first task in strategic media is to change the subject. The media sometimes misses the point and will frame stories about people of color, youth and the poor in ways that blame the victims for problem. We must redefine the problem in a way that points to its genuine roots and offer a solution that points to the institutions, not victims, responsible. This strategy requires that we also do research to answer these questions.

An example from Y-MAC
Y-MAC's biggest research tool is an annual youth election conducted in San Francisco high schools. Through YouthVOTE, students voice their views on the issues and candidates on the November ballot and answer survey questions related to youth issues. The 5,000 to 10,000 students who participate in YouthVOTE each year help Y-MAC develop issue campaigns that can have an impact on policy decisions made by adults.

For example, in the aftermath of the Columbine tragedy, the city of San Francisco put more police officers in the high schools without consulting students. When the YouthVOTE survey showed that 70% of students did not want more police on their campuses, and, in fact, felt increasingly unsafe because of their presence, student organizers had data to back up their challenge to the city's political leaders. They held a press conference on school safety and encouraged the addition of more nurses, counselors and mental health workers who could support youth in critical ways. Y-MAC used the media to redefine the problem and offer a solution. At that time it came to light that there was only one health clinic in all of the city's 20 public high schools, and that none of the other high schools even had a nurse. Y-MAC took this information as a call to action and successfully organized, rallying four million dollars to fund seven new school-based wellness centers. ■

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Challenging the Norm in Welfare Reform Reporting

Congress passed legislation in 1996 that substantially changed the face of welfare by making benefits contingent on meeting work or work preparation requirements. After almost five years, the reauthorization deadline for this legislation looms close on the horizon (October 1, 2002).

There is little doubt that the media will play a role in informing the reauthorization debate. Welfare reform researchers who want to disseminate their results and advocates who want to build public will for their positions can be more effective in informing the debate if their media strategies are grounded in research on how welfare issues have been presented to date.

The Dominant Frame

We know from social science research that the manner in which a problem is "framed" can profoundly influence how it is viewed. As William Gamson notes, "Policy controversies [like those inherent in welfare reform and its reauthorization] inevitably involve battles over meaning. Think of them as *framing contests*. On most issues there is typically a conventional, dominant frame that most people use … Controversy is created when challenges offer an alternative way of framing an issue."[1]

The dominant frame in the mainstream media on poverty and welfare reform appears to be one of *personal responsibility*. This frame "fits" with the intent of 1996 welfare reform legislation that emphasized work in return for receiving benefits.

In addition to the focus on personal responsibility, coverage on welfare is often episodic; it tells stories about individual welfare recipients (and often not success stories) and neglects to place stories in a broader context that connects them to causes or solutions.

Media campaigns with a stake in perpetuating this dominant frame during the reauthorization debate are at an advantage. Those who want to challenge this frame have a more difficult task. However, lessons from ethnic media research may provide some useful tips for tackling that task.

Adding Value through Ethnic Media Research

In 2000, the Harvard Family Research Project embarked on a media research project to shed more light on how the media was treating the topic of welfare reform.[2] This research took a unique vantage point by looking at how the ethnic media covered this topic.

HFRP analyzed the content of articles published between October, 1999, and March, 2000, from a total of nine African-American, Native-American and Spanish language newspapers. Researchers read each newspaper thoroughly, clipped or downloaded articles and summarized the content based on research protocol.

When the ethnic media research is juxtaposed against the presentation of research in the mainstream media, it provides a useful contrast for how messages about welfare reform can be framed for a different or possibly greater effect.

An Alternative Frame

As the following quote illustrates, while personal responsibility is still discussed in ethnic media coverage of welfare reform, HFRP found that governmental responsibility in helping people transition off of welfare and out of poverty became part of the frame.

> If Giuliani wants to help people make the transition from welfare to work — not just get them off the rolls — then he should ensure that transitional benefits like Medicaid, food stamps, and day care are available for those leaving public assistance. Instead, his 'job centers' inappropriately close cases, turning away thousands who would qualify for these benefits, making it tougher for them to get and hold a job.
>
> - "The Urban Agenda: Giuliani: Building His Campaign on the Backs of the Homeless," *New York Amsterdam News*, 11/10/99

This frame is strategic because it opens the issue up and challenges people to look at welfare reform in a slightly different and expanded way, building on the notion of personal responsibility and suggesting that welfare recipients want to work and be responsible but realistically need help in transitioning off welfare.

Enhancing the Alternative Frame

All good frames should define the issue, explain who is responsible and suggest potential solutions. HFRP's ethnic media research suggests that there are ways to enhance the alternative frame for greater impact.

First, the issue can be defined by connecting it with results about what has happened *to* families and children. While welfare reform has sparked a colossal amount of research, much of the story on results to date has been reported in terms of simple caseload declines.[3]

Second, the frame needs to connect with a discussion of solutions. Policy analysts note that some of the primary reauthorization questions will be targeted at what government supports are needed for families who have left welfare and for those who remain.[4] The challenge for those who want to effectively inform the debate will be not only to frame this issue by indicating that current and former welfare recipients need supports and that government can play an important role in providing those supports, but also to connect this discussion with clear and specific policy implications. ■

Danielle Hollar, HFRP consultant
Julia Coffman, HFRP consultant

[1] Gamson, W. (2000). Framing social policy. *The New England Nonprofit Quarterly, 7(2)*, http://www.newenglandnonprofit.org/advocacy/framing.htm.

[2] This was part of a larger research project connected to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Devolution Initiative to examine how the media covered welfare reform and health care – two policy areas that devolved considerably from the federal level to the state level in the 1990s.

[3] We Interrupt this Message (1999). *Silencing poverty: A study on news coverage of welfare*. San Francisco, CA. Hollar, D. (2001). A holistic theoretical model for examining welfare reform: Quality of life. Forthcoming in *Public Administration Review*.

[4] Haskins, R., Sawhill, I., and Weaver, K. (2001). *Welfare reform: Reauthorization: An overview of problems and issues*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

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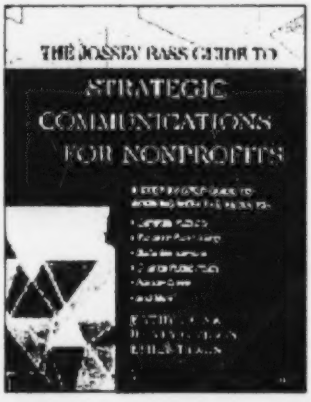
This article details the process of designing a plan for strategic communications as discussed in *The Jossey-Bass guide to strategic communications for nonprofits*, written by Kathy Bonk, Henry Griggs and Emily Tynes, 1999.

The ABCs of Strategic Communications

A communications plan is an important part of an organization's daily operation. As a living document, it frames media activities, including internal and external communications, clarifies the organization's priorities, target audiences, resources and staff assignments.

What are the elements of a communications plan?

The elements are basically the same whether an organization is, for example, a large not-for-profit hospital, a museum, a university, a small advocacy group, service provider or foundation. A communications plan affirms and is driven by the organization's goals and outcomes, its vision, as expressed in a mission statement, and its values and beliefs.



Overall communications goals:
The organization's communications goals may include:

- Developing and implementing communications plans for enhanced visibility and crisis management
- Generating positive media coverage by cultivating relationships with reporters
- Increasing the awareness and involvement of specific, targeted groups of individuals
- Changing attitudes or teaching new skills to clients and staff
- Generating support from the public, policy makers and clients for community reforms across your state
- Encouraging financial contributions

The activities in the communications plan should support the organization's overall communications goals. It is important to set measurable goals in order to know when they have been achieved and to be able to gauge the progress along the way.

Vision and mission statement
The organizational mission statement is the cornerstone of the communications plan, driving the overall direction of media activities. The organization should include this mission statement at the very beginning of the communications plan to remind staff, board members and other internal decision makers that media-related activities flow from the organization's core mission and vision, not just from its communications department. Media activities enhance the organization's overall image, advance its agenda and influence public will.

Organizational values and beliefs
Every organization, foundation, public agency and institution has, at its heart, a system of values and beliefs. These values should be reflected in all that the organization plans and does, including communications goals and strategic plans.

Critical elements of a communications plan
In addition to the goals, vision and values that form the cornerstone of an organization's communications strategy, there are six critical elements organizations need to construct that strategy:

- *An understanding of the target audience and how to reach it*
- *Research into past media coverage and public opinion about the issues*
- *Messages to be delivered*
- *Materials to be produced*
- *Financial resources from which staff and equipment will be drawn*
- *A written work plan*

It is important to identify these elements and put them in place before implementing day-to-day activities. Successful implementation of a communications plan depends on pulling these elements together:

Identification of the target audience
The first task is to identify who the target audience is and how to reach it. List categories of people who are important to the success of the organization and identify ways to reach them. Audiences may include donors, potential members, elected officials, church groups, judges and the legal community, business leaders, communities of color, trade associations, women's leaders, teens, senior citizens and the general public. In addition to these important outside audiences, it is important for organization not to forget its internal audiences, such as staff, board members and volunteers.

Research into media coverage, public opinion and facts
How do target audiences perceive the organization and its issues? With the Internet, it is not difficult to develop a profile of how the organization's issues are covered in the media, how often the organization is quoted or described, and what public opinion polls have been done on relevant topics. A short and simple media analysis can be an instructive tool and will indicate the amount of resources necessary to increase name recognition.

Good data can be a gold mine in outreach to the media. Most media use "factoids" to help their audiences put stories in perspective. A good communications plan should collect data on the important issues in formats that can answer the "who, what, when, where, why and how."

Message development
Develop a phrase of four to ten words to describe the organization that

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can be used every time a reporter does a story about the agency. It is important to be able to tell reporters how the group wants to be described; otherwise, journalists will come up with descriptions that may not be accurate.

The next step is to develop message points for the organization's spokespeople to use when they talk with reporters. One might consist of the basic facts about the group, but should be limited to three or four points to communicate in each interview.

Answer the following questions in-house before every media event or interview: What should the headline be? What should the article include? Answers given in the interview or at the media event should always deliver the key points.

Production of high-quality public relations materials

Public relations materials are important tools for reaching reporters, donors, policy makers and others in the target audience. These should include:

- A consistent and easy-to-recognize logo and stationery design
- An easy-to-understand, one page fact sheet about the organization
- At least one press kit on the issues and activities to be highlighted in the media
- Hard copy brochures and consistent Web site content
- Videos, slides, overheads and computer presentations
- Reports and studies for public release as news items
- One paragraph and one page biographies on spokespeople and agency heads
- Copies of the current newsletter, if there is one
- Copies of newspaper articles about the group

Assessment of resources

The communications plan needs to spell out how resources will be allocated, including staff time, budgets, computers, software, equipment, databases, in-house and contract services and volunteer help. For mid-sized to large organizations, it is prudent to hire a communications director. In agencies with fewer than ten employees, everyone from the executive director to the person who answers the phone should be a part of the communications team. A resource review for the organization should do the following:

- Assess staff time, in-house services and existing media technologies
- Recommend and arrange for training and technology updates as needed
- Designate or decide to hire a communications director
- Develop a budget that includes provisions for outside contracts and services, such as freelance writing, video production, database management, graphic design and Web site management
- Access funding and build programs for expanded activities that include executive loan programs, internships, pro bono support from commercial media firms, donations from local and regional corporations and grants from foundations.

Development of a work plan

Organizations should develop work plans for each major activity or event and try to review overall plans at least quarterly. Elements of a communications work plan should spell out assignments and important tasks:

- Develop timelines, calendars of events and priorities
- Assign responsibilities to lead and support staff, giving each a list of specific tasks
- Review progress and enforce or revise deadlines
- Hold people responsible for completing work and reassign tasks as needed

No strategic communications plan is complete without a built-in evaluation component as a way to check accountability and make improvements over time.

Crisis control

The work plan should also include a crisis control plan. This should be thought of as a fire drill, and regardless how non controversial the organization, there should be a plan in place to deal with possible negative stories in the media. This plan should include the identification of a crisis coordination team, a plan to ensure timely and appropriate responses to negative press and regular internal briefings about the procedures for implementing a damage control plan.

Evaluation

No strategic communications plan is complete without a built-in evaluation component as a way to check accountability and make improvements over time. Major evaluation activities might include analyzing media content and monitoring certain developments, such as shifts in public opinion, policy changes, increased membership and organizational participation, and improved institutional capacity.

Summary

A written communications plan should be easy to read and should have a format adaptable for overhead or computer presentations to larger audiences. Most organizations have been through a strategic planning process at some point; this effort is no different. Remember, the elements of a communications plan are basically the same whether the organization has thousands, hundreds, dozens, or a handful of employees. ■

Bonk, Kathy, Griggs, Henry and Tynes, Emily. (1999). Designing a Communications Plan, Chapter 4. *The Jossey-Bass guide to strategic communications for nonprofits.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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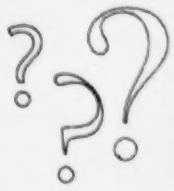
> ask the expert

We asked two experts, both representatives from foundations, to address the role of strategic communications in philanthropy today. How can strategic communications contribute to achieving desired outcomes for both a foundation and its grantees, and how can foundations support the strategic communications efforts of their grantees?

Karen Lake works as director of communications for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Grant Oliphant is director of planning and communications for The Heinz Endowments.



Karen Lake: "At the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Marketing and Communications Department is part of a bigger unit known as Impact Services, which is comprised of the Marketing and Communications staff, as well as staff from Policy, Evaluation, Organizational Learning and Technology. All of the Impact Service areas work together to support programming goals. In Marketing and Communications, this means providing direct support to programming staff for a range of activities. The department is responsible for conceptualizing strategies and for developing quality communication tools to advance Foundation goals. As part of this process, it integrates and refines the themes and messages that tell the Kellogg Foundation story. Although printed and electronic materials may be the most visible signs of Marketing and Communication activities, a more lasting product of the department's collective efforts is changed public perceptions and behaviors that advance the Kellogg Foundation mission.

"The Marketing and Communications Department seeks to connect with both internal and external audiences. Increasing programming impact – fostering systemic change for societal benefit through public dissemination of lessons learned from grantee efforts — is one crucial dimension of the Department's work. Another is leveraging learning — expanding the impact of programming within the Foundation to increase organizational effectiveness and inform program decisions.

"To accomplish these goals, the Marketing and Communications Department assigns a communication manager to work closely with staff in the programming units. Similar support is provided to administrative units in the Foundation. The communication manager functions as an internal partner in each phase of programming — from conceptualization of strategic approaches and the production of communication tools to the analysis of impact on target audiences. Whether the task is accessing resource data, identifying related trends and key audiences, developing strategies and tools to reach targeted groups or packaging and disseminating information about impact, the communication managers are responsible for managing and integrating strategic communications to advance program directions and increase return on the Kellogg Foundation's investment.

"The ultimate programming goal of any foundation is to achieve greater impact for social benefit. Foundations seek solutions to societal problems — solutions that can be applied to other communities on a local, state, national or even global scale. But finding workable solutions is not enough. To achieve maximum impact, the ideas and information that come from grantee experiences must be distilled into communication strategies to inform a wider audience. Only by placing new knowledge in the hands of decision-makers — policy makers, parents, teachers, farmers, health professionals, colleagues in philanthropy and others — can a foundation hope to achieve its objectives and accomplish its mission.

"Marketing and communications staff are actors in philanthropy. As such, part of their job is to help engage and empower foundation grantees to both embrace and use the marketing and communication tools to bring about lasting changes.

"A goal of the Kellogg Foundation is to ensure that staff members leave grantees with the skills and competencies needed to continue their project long after the Foundation's funding and involvement has ended. This may be accomplished through workshops, direct technical assistance, and advice and consultation. It also may include linking grantees to people and resources in the field who can help them achieve their goals.

"Ultimately, the Foundation hopes grantees will recognize the value and importance of integrating marketing and communications into their work. Beyond that, it seeks to instill critical planning, implementation, and follow-up skills with grantees. It wants them to be able to deliver the right message in the right medium at the right time to the right audience. By being able to do this, the grantee will be able to advance it goals, maximize organizational resources and capitalize on opportunities in the larger environment."

Grant Oliphant: "It's fair to turn this question around and ask how any foundation that is serious about its obligation to create value could realistically expect to do so in today's world *without* a strong communications capacity. The outcomes most foundations seek involve either promoting learning, through the dissemination of knowledge, or changing social and individual attitudes and behaviors. Both of these, at heart, are communications challenges, and we live in what is arguably the most complex communications environment in human history.

"At The Heinz Endowments, we have been working to develop a more coordinated approach among our five program areas around a shared set of organizational goals. As part of that process, we have increased our emphasis on communications, going so far as to connect that role with strategic planning and evaluation as part of a portfolio of services designed to heighten our impact and measure our effectiveness, both within programs and as a whole organization.

"We have learned that it is important not only to prioritize strategic communications planning at the level of the foundation, but also to invest in building the capacity of key grantee organizations to draft, execute and coordinate strategic communications plans of their own. Grantees are often seen by foundations as part of a broad effort to improve public policy, move public will, or affect how people and communities make decisions. Yet these organizations typically are adept only at the traditional, one-on-one service model and have little or no grounding in the varied communications techniques demanded by the complicated media environment in which we all now find ourselves. Moreover, they rarely have a clear sense for how their efforts relate to the work of other grantees or to the broad goals of the foundation.

"A strong communications planning process can help a foundation and its grantees identify shared goals and opportunities for unified action. The template for such a process is fairly simple. It begins with basic steps: clarifying the project or mission and its relation to the overall mission of the foundation; delineating the partners or players involved; and identifying the key target audiences and the changes in knowledge or behavior that are desired.

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> new&noteworthy

The **Berkeley Media Studies Group** works with community groups, journalists and public health professionals to use the power of the media to advance public policy. They study the process of news gathering and analyze media content to support media advocacy training, professional education and strategic consultation. **http://www.phi.org/programs/programs-centers.htm#bms**

Causemedia Inc. is a full-service communications firm that integrates cause-related and social marketing strategies with compelling media campaigns for maximum visibility and heightened public awareness. Clients include the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Boston Public Health Commission and WGBH. For more information, contact: Causemedia, 50 Hunt Street, Watertown, MA 02472 **http://www.causemedia.com**

The Center for Communications and Community at the University of California, Los Angeles, is a service, research and training institution that works to develop media relationships so that community-based organizations can effectively interpret news stories, engage in policy advocacy and fundamentally alter the shape and scope of public policy. Frank Gilliam, Ph.D., is the Center's director. For more information, contact: Center for Communications and Community, UCLA, 1015 Gayley Avenue, Suite 105, Los Angeles, CA 90024-3424; 310-794-6211, tel.; e-mail: fgilliam@ucla.edu **http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/ccc/**

The **Communication Initiative** focuses on the use of strategic communications for sustainable development. Their Web site includes opinion polls, discussion forums, electronic magazines and a directory of people, organizations and programs involved in communication and international development. For more information, visit **http://www.comminit.com**

Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns & Associates, Inc. (GMMB&A) is a strategic communications firm specializing in advertising, political consulting and public education campaigns on social problems. Clients include Child Welfare League of America, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, the Democratic National Committee, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. **http://www.gmmb.com**

The **Kaiser Family Foundation's** Web-based project, **www.kaisernetwork.org**, provides live audio and video coverage of health policy events, daily health reports, analysis of health ads, searchable database of health opinion polls and a calendar of national events.

The Strategic Press Information Network (SPIN) project helps grow the capacity of grassroots groups to shape public opinion and garner positive media attention by providing comprehensive media training and intensive strategizing. SPIN's products include *SPIN Works!*, a media guidebook for communicating values and shaping opinion, and *Internet PR*, an online tutorial designed to help grassroots activists determine why and how to use the Internet throughout media campaigns. For more information, contact: Independent Media Institute, 77 Federal St. 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94107 **http://www.spinproject.org**

Underground Advertising creates unique advertising for nonprofit organizations and socially-minded businesses. Clients include The Pew Charitable Trusts, Rainforest Action Network, the Breast Cancer Fund and the Legal Community Against Violence. For more information, contact: Underground Advertising, Pier 9, Suite 116, San Francisco, CA 94111; 415-433-9334, tel. **http://www.undergroundads.com**

Bales, Susan N. (Ed.). (1999). ***Effective language for communicating children's issues.*** **Washington, DC: Coalition for America's Children and the Benton Foundation.** Conducted to aid child advocates in developing effective messages, the discussions highlighted in this report unearthed adults' views on health care, poverty, welfare, the working poor, crime, rebuilding communities and why children should be a priority. **http://www.connectforkids.org**

Balch, George I., and Sutton, Sharyn M. ***Keep me posted: A plea for practical evaluation.*** **Washington, DC: Sutton Social Marketing.** **http://www.suttonsocialmarketing.com**

The CSAP Communications Team, located at University Research Co., LLC. developed a set of technical assistance bulletins to enhance the communications capacity of national, state and local groups. They are available for use by the general public via SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at **http://www.health.org** or 1-800-729-6686 (1-800-487-4889/TDD). (The NCADI inventory number follows each title.) Titles include: *Working with the Mass Media* (MS708), *Choosing Appropriate Channels of Communications* (MS724), *Identifying the Target Audience* (MS700), *Evaluating the Results of Communications Programs* (MS706) and *Culturally Competent Approaches to Media Literacy* (MS724). University Research Company, LLC, 7200 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 500, Bethesda, MD 20814; e-mail: cct@urc-chs.com

Carragee, Kevin M., Ryan, Charlotte, and Schwerner, Cassie. (1998). **Media, movements, and the quest for social justice.** ***Journal of Applied Communication Research, 26*****(2).** This essay examines the efforts of the Media Research and Action Project to assist marginalized groups in employing news as a political resource. The analysis highlights the news media as critical arenas of struggle for social movements and community groups seeking political change and social justice.

Galinsky, Ellen, and Nina Sazer O'Donnell. (2000). ***The seven lessons of early childhood public engagement.*** **New York, NY: Families and Work Institute.** This brief describes recent early childhood public engagement efforts nationwide and outlines critical lessons for public engagement leaders. **https://swww.igc.apc.org/fwi**

Gilliam, Frank and Iyengar, Shanto. (2000). Prime suspects: The influence of local television news on the viewing public. ***American Journal of Political Science, 44*****(3).** Using several methods of analysis, this paper evaluates the contribution of violence and race in news scripts on public opinion. The authors examine the prevalence of the crime news script in the local television news market, undertake several experiments using different versions of a crime script and conduct a survey of county residents' news-viewing habits and views on crime and race. For more information on this study, visit **http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/ccc/papers/primesus.html** or contact The Center for Communications and Community: 310-794-6211, tel; e-mail: fgilliam@ucla.edu

Gilliam, Frank and Iyengar, Shanto. (1998). The superpredator script. ***Nieman Reports. Children and violence: The witness. The victim. The accused, 52*****(4).** **The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University.** In this report, the authors detail an experiment they conducted to examine the connections between local newscasts and viewers' perceptions of juvenile crime. They analyze different news frames used and propose alternative approaches for story reporting. **http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/98-4NRwint98/Gilliam.html**

Gunther, Herbert C. (1998). ***10 principles for effective advocacy campaigns.*** **San Francisco: Public Media Centre.** This guide provides succinct yet potent strategies for reaching a target audience. Issues addressed include agenda-setting, strategic diversity and influencing the undecided. **http://media.socialchange.net.au**

Gould, Douglas. (1997). ***A funder's guide to successful media investments.*** **Douglas Gould & Co.** is a communications consulting firm dedicated to helping progressive not-for-profit organizations and foundations advance important causes through effective multimedia education strategies and campaigns. **http://www.douglasgould.com**

Iyengar, Shanto. (1991). ***Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues.*** **Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.** This article examines the effects on the public of thematic and episodic

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Footnotes for Theory & Practice,
continued from page 4 >

[1] See Coffman, J. (2000). Simplifying complex initiative evaluation. In *The Evaluation Exchange.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

2 Karel, Frank. (2000). Getting the word out: A foundation memoir and personal journey. In Isaacs, Stephen L., and Knickman, James R. (Eds.) *To improve health and health care 2001: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Anthology.* Princeton, NJ: The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

[3] See the California Children and Families Commission's "2000-2001 Fiscal Year Objectives and Priorities" document at http://www.ccfc.ca.gov/files/ObjPriorities7-20-00.pdf for more information. Proposition 10 is funded by a tobacco tax that generates approximately $700 million annually providing major non-categorical resources to help California's young children and their families.

[4] Rogers, E. M. (1994). *A history of communication study: A biographical approach.* New York: The Free Press.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Iyengar, S. & Kinder, D. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[7] Kinder, D. R. (1998). Communication and opinion. In *Annual Review of Political Science. 1: 167-97.*

[8] Gilliam, F.D. (May, 1999). The influence of local television news frames on attitudes about childcare. In *Effective language for communicating children's issues.* Washington, DC: Coalition for America's Children with the Benton Foundation.

[9] Rogers, E. M. (1994). *A history of communication study: A biographical approach.* New York: The Free Press.

[10] Page, B. I. & Shapiro, R. Y. (1983). Effects of public opinion on policy. In *The American Political Science Review.* 77: 175-190. Also see Weiss, J. A. & Tschirhart, M. (1994). Public information campaigns as policy instruments. In *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management. 13: 1, 82, 119.* Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

[11] Dungan-Seaver, D. (December, 1999). *Mass media initiatives and children's issues: An analysis of research and recent experience relevant to potential philanthropic funders.* Prepared for The McKnight Foundation. Also see Andreasen, A. R. (1995). *Marketing social change: Changing behavior to promote health, social development, and the environment.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

12 Voices for Illinois Children commissioned Market Strategies, Inc. to do a poll of 600 registered voters in Illinois between February 15 and 19 of 2000. The margin of error on the poll is +/- 4.0%. Source: www.earlycare.org. See also Bostrom, M. (May, 1999). Children as a political issue: A review of public opinion. In *Effective language for communicating children's issues.* Washington, DC: Coalition for America's Children with the Benton Foundation.

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framing in network reports. News cases covered include crime, terrorism, poverty, unemployment, racial inequality and the Iran-Contra Affair.

Iyengar, Shanto and Richard Reeves. (Eds.) (1997). ***Do the media govern?: Politicians, voters, and reporters in America.*** **Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.** This collection of articles focuses on the business of news reporting, the effects of news on its audience, the use of the media in the policy process and media-based political campaigns.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. (1979). ***Metaphors we live by.*** **Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.** This paper examines the use of metaphors in everyday speech and their importance in language and understanding.

Leiderman, Sally, Wendy Wolf and Peter York. (2000). ***Some thoughts about public will.*** **Center for Assessment and Policy Development.** A progress report on investments in public will, this publication covers frameworks, messages, the role of foundations, lessons learned and next steps in public will strategies to improve outcomes for children and families. **http://www.capd.org**

Ortony, Andrew. (Ed.) (1979, most recent is 1993). ***Metaphor and thought.*** **Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.** The essays in this book are revised papers presented at the 1977 multidisciplinary conference on metaphor and thought at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Topics include education, psychology and social policy. Of special note is the essay titled, "Generative Metaphor: A Perspective on Problem-Setting in Social Policy," by Donald A. Schon.

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Making health communications programs work: A planner's guide. **(1992). Bethesda, MD: National Cancer Institute, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** Expanding upon and replacing "Pretesting in Health Communications," this guide explains the factors that contribute to a successful health communications program and includes examples of their use. Although currently out of print and only available on the Web, a newly revised version and an interactive version will soon be available online. The print version will be available within a year. **http://rex.nci.nih.gov/PATIENTS/COMM_ED_RES/PLAN_PUBS.htm**

Reaching young people worldwide: Lessons learned from planning and communications projects, 1986-1995. **(1996). Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs.** More than 30 programs from around the world that help youth maintain their health are reviewed. Chapters present research and evaluation methods, communication outputs and activities, collaboration and support and lessons learned. Activities that benefit youth and references are also included. **http:// www.jhuccp.org/pubs/working_papers/wp2/contents.html**

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Sixty-second guide to working with the news media. **The Independent Sector.** This guide provides quick tips for staff and volunteers in building strong media relations skills, with topics such as building and maintaining friendships, pitching a story, deciding when to put out a news release or hold a news conference, editorial pages and talk radio shows. **http://www.independentsector.org** ■

Kathleen Hart, HFRP research analyst

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> *continued from page 17*

"The next step is to develop and test messages for delivery to the target audiences. During this phase, it is not only important to know how the target audiences understand, react to and potentially act on the messages to be delivered, but also crucial to know the context in which those messages will be delivered. At what policies or behaviors will the messages be directed? What is the policy environment for those issues at that time? What events might be happening in the target area at the time the messages will be delivered? What other messages have recently been delivered to those audiences? The answers to these questions may change the strategic approach to message delivery.

"Concurrently, the foundation and its grantees can be collaborating on a plan for the effective delivery and support of these messages. The plan should include first the building of an infrastructure for sustained communications, and second, the implementation of that infrastructure to achieve communications goals.

"The building of the infrastructure may include the creation of networks for communications and advocacy among organizations with similar missions. While like-minded organizations routinely undertake communications initiatives, sometimes these initiatives are more patch than quilt. Their lack of coordination can limit the ability of organizations to become potent advocates or to leverage successful programs and learn from unsuccessful ones.

"Strategic communications is not a panacea; it is not the solution to every challenge. But it is almost always part of the solution. And the communications planning process, when conducted in an inclusive fashion that invites grantees in and devotes as much time to listening as to speaking, invariably will help foundations and the organizations we fund to challenge cherished assumptions and to become more effective voices for change." ■

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation: http://www.wkkf.org
The Heinz Endowments: http://www.heinz.org

browsing

HFRP is proud to announce the launch of its new and improved Web site, featuring a design overhaul, streamlined content and additions of several new resources, including "news" and "research areas" links.

HFRP online continues to offer an exhaustive listing of its publications on early childhood care and education, family, school and community issues, evaluation and accountability information and professional development, with many available for free download.

The site also offers access to family involvement tools and resources via the FINE network (The Family Involvement Network of Educators) and offers both html and pdf versions of ***The Evaluation Exchange***.

We hope you will visit the new site, still at the same URL, and encourage you to offer feedback on changes and suggestions for improvement. Happy browsing!

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the evaluation exchange

Harvard Family Research Project ▮ Harvard Graduate School of Education ▮ Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child & Family Services ▮ Vol. VII No. 2 ▮ Spring 2001

from the director's desk

The conversation continues…

As many of you know, our Fall 2000 (Volume 6, Number 1) issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* focused on after school programs and out-of-school time. So, you might be wondering, why publish another issue on the same topic so soon after the first? Well, with so much activity in the after school field—programmatically, academically, and philanthropically—we think there is more to talk about than one issue can hold. We are interested not just in continuing the conversation, but in engaging in dialogue that broadens the scope of discussions that help to shape the future of after school programs and out-of-school time.

In the first out-of-school time issue, we outlined some of the challenges facing the after school field: building evaluation capacity; incorporating continuous improvement as a component of good practice; selecting appropriate outcomes; and strengthening the connection between outcomes and theory. As we confront these challenges, we uncover opportunities for creativity and innovation that serve as springboards for new investment in the out-of-school time field. Examples of this creativity include involving youth in research and evaluation, connecting developmental theory to after school program practice and evaluation, and including communities as agents in positive youth development.

However, the greatest opportunity that arises from confronting the challenges that face the field is that of learning through dialogue. To share and build the knowledge base for the field of out-of-school time, conversations need to cut across position and place and involve theorists, practitioners, evaluators and funders, in various locations, with wide ranging skills and backgrounds. These conversations must happen in many different venues—in person, in print and on-line—and address the important ways in which program development, data collection and performance management and program evaluation can be connected to program improvement and field development.

This conversation can begin by understanding the role that developmental research plays in setting the stage for understanding the most important element of after school programs—the youth themselves. What are the developmental benchmarks for middle childhood? For adolescence? What are the important supports that after school programs can offer to help youth through these critical years?

Evaluations of large initiatives contribute to building the out-of-school time field. These investments document and demonstrate the practices and outcomes that help smaller, local programs argue for local investment in programs and policies. In addition to informing policy on a national level, these large initiatives help to strengthen local capacity for evaluation by testing instruments that can be adapted and used by local evaluators.

This understanding in place, the conversation then incorporates local-level initiatives and evaluators. These stakeholders offer new perspectives and valuable feedback to buttress the knowledge built at the national level. Their on-the-ground, local knowledge brings to the more general, national discussion a new context for conversation.

However fruitful this discussion may be, it is incomplete without the support of funders. Investing in building evaluation capacity at the local level and building the infrastructure for information sharing and dissemination are important contributions funders can make.

We see this conversation as a form of continuous improvement for the field of after school and out-of-school time as a whole. Information gathered by one program to meet its funders accountability needs or to satisfy evaluation requirements is rich with lessons that can inform a broader audience of after school stakeholders. Lessons learned in other education and human service fields can inform the development of practice and evaluation in the field of out-of-school time. Investments in after school programs can be reconceptualized as investing in youth, in communities and in the knowledge base that informs after school programs across the country. Building the capacity of after school programs can mean more than capacity to collect data or participate in evaluation; it can mean the capacity to participate in a cross-cutting conversation in which evaluators, practitioners, funders, policy makers and other after school stakeholders learn from each other, continuously improving the out-of-school time field.

This issue and the Fall, 2000 issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* are part of our contribution to this ongoing conversation.

Heather

Heather B. Weiss, Ed.D.
Founder & Director

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The Evaluation Exchange accepts contributions from policy makers, practitioners and researchers in evaluation and related fields. Contributions are welcome for regular *Evaluation Exchange* columns, as well as articles that highlight the training component of evaluation practice.

Please send a query letter outlining your proposed article to:

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> new & noteworthy

Belle, Deborah. (1999). *The After-School Lives of Children: Alone and With Others While Parents Work.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Belle conducted a four-year longitudinal study of families in the Boston area who had children in after school arrangements. Her book describes types of supervision, stressful challenges to parents, children's social relationships and supports, and offers advice to parents and policy makers.

Seligson, Michelle. *Bringing Yourself to Work: Caregiving in After-School Environments*, is a new training model for after school program staff that places emphasis on the importance of self-awareness among caregivers. The project components are currently being developed and include a book, a staff training program and a training manual that will be available to after school programs across the country. *Bringing Yourself to Work* builds on insights from several disciplines, including organizational behavior, youth development and relational/cultural theory, as well as research on the increasingly popular field of "emotional intelligence." http://www.bringingyourselftowork.com

Danish, Stephen J., and Thomas P. Guillotta, eds. (2000). *Developing Competent Youth and Strong Communities Through After-School Programming.* Washington, DC: CWLA Press. This compilation of essays covers topics such as the strengths and weaknesses of sports programming, the development of programs for girls, the role of arts in youth development and the use of festivals to develop healthy youth and strong neighborhoods. An examination of the elements of social competency and community characteristics that significantly contribute to the positive development of youth is also included.

Eccles, Jacquelynne, and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, eds. (2001, forthcoming) *Beyond the Front Stoop.* Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. This book discusses the features of programs that contribute to a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. It examines what is known about the current landscape of youth development programs for America's youth, and how these programs are meeting the diverse needs of youth. To access this publication, search for the title at http://www.nap. edu/books/

The topic of the April 2001 issue of *Educational Leadership* is "Beyond Class Time" and has several articles on after school programs. The journal, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, features research on life after school, solutions to challenges faced by after school programs, and collaborations between schools and community-based organizations. http://www.ascd.org/frameedlead.html

Family Support Centers: A Program Manager's Toolkit. (2000). Chicago, IL: Family Support America. For twenty years Family Support America has provided technical assistance to family support centers; this reference publication provides answers to critical questions and offers a multitude of solutions for the social services arena. There are three volumes: Program Planning and Evaluation, Managing Ongoing Operations, and The Power of Partnership. Order online at http://www.familysupportamerica.org

Gootman, Jennifer Appleton, ed. (2000). *After-School Programs that Promote Child and Adolescent Development: Summary of a Workshop.* Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, Board on Children, Youth, and Families, National Research Council, Institute of Medicine. This report summarizes the presentations and discussions at the workshop, "Opportunities to Promote Child and Adolescent Development During the After-School Hours," convened on October 21, 1999. The workshop was organized by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, with funding from the Packard Foundation. It brought together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to examine research on the developmental needs of children and adolescents and the types of after school programs designed to promote health and development of these young people. To access this publication, search for the title at http://www.nap.edu/books/0309071798/html/

Homework Assistance & Out-Of-School Time: Filling the Need and Finding the Balance; Literacy: Exploring Strategies to Enhance Learning in After-School Programs. Nashville, TN: School-Age Notes and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time. These two publications are combined in one book designed to give directors and staff of out-of-school programs information and tools needed to cope with the changing demands of out-of-school time for school-age children. Call 1-800-410-8780 for availability, or visit http://www.afterschoolcatalog.com

Jacobs, Francine, Kapuscik, Jennifer, with Patricia Williams and Erika Kates. *Making It Count: Evaluating Family Preservation Services.* Medford, MA: The Family Preservation Evaluation Project at Tufts University. This guide explains how to conduct feasible, affordable, and ongoing evaluations of programs at the state or local level using the Five-Tiered Approach to program evaluation. To order this publication, send a check or money order for $22.50 payable to Trustees of Tufts College, to: FPEP c/o Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, Tufts University, 105 College Avenue, Medford, MA 02155.

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Supporting Effective After School Programs: The Contribution of Developmental Research

In this article, Jacquelynne Eccles, McKeachie Collegiate Professor of Psychology, Women's Studies, and Education, and editor of the soon-to-be released volume on community based programs for youth, sponsored by the National Research Council in conjunction with the National Academy of Science, shares her thoughts about the contribution of developmental research to the after school conversation and the need for an infrastructure to support this.

After school programs are everywhere; in schools, community centers, parks and youth serving organizations. Increased concern on the part of parents, educators, researchers and policy makers about the kinds of activities youth are involved in during out-of-school time has led to this recent growth spurt for after school programs. The challenge facing these programs is to provide healthy, developmentally appropriate and enriching experiences for youth, while at the same time meeting demands to show the resulting benefits that accrue from participation. In concert with practitioners, educators, parents and policy makers, developmental researchers can help to identify the pathways that lead from fun activities to positive outcomes for youth.

We are at a unique juncture. Politicians, practitioners, educators, employers, academics, parents and citizens have all become interested in youth and how to best provide them with the experiences they need.

The Youth Development Field Today

Developmental research about adolescence has changed tremendously in the twenty-five years since it first came on the research radar screen. Always a hard developmental period to study because of the many and interrelated changes going on in young people's bodies and lives, we now understand that longitudinal, highly contextualized and inter-disciplinary research are the most effective approaches for studying this age group.

In the years since adolescence became a focal point for developmental researchers, we have seen our perspective within the field evolve from thinking of adolescence as a problem and conflict-ridden period to one in which positive youth development ideals are promoted. This refocusing on positive youth development has come about as a result of the work of developmental researchers, largely supported through early money targeting prevention activities. It is supported by the strong practice-based knowledge of large organizations such as Boys Scouts, Girl Scouts and the Y's as well as countless other, much smaller programs helping kids. These programs have a broad-based goal to help children and adolescents develop across a wide array of areas of their lives—skills areas, social areas, emotional areas, moral areas and citizenship areas. These strong advocates from the world of practice, in concert with researchers and policy makers, have been a voice for youth for many decades and have brought us, in large measure, to the place we are now.

Some describe the current youth development field as divided between those who promote prevention and those who advocate positive youth development; although there is this tension, I don't believe it is necessary. From my perspective, both the prevention perspective and the positive development perspective have contributed to the excellent work done on the key ingredients for successful adolescence; ingredients that we all agree contribute to healthy, well-functioning youth. Both these perspectives have their place in the development, implementation and evaluation of youth-serving organizations and after school programs.

The more important question, it seems, is whether current investments in after school programs are going to focus primarily on educational remediation or more general, positive development. I think this question is being answered in the field. If you look at after school programs on the ground, most are far more than just tutorial programs. People are interested in remediation, but they're also very interested in good places for kids to be. And they *know* youth will walk out of those places that are just tutorial. So we see programs emerging that are very broad and comprehensive. And this, I think, is very good.

The Youth Development Field and Accountability

There is no question that the current interest and investment in after school and other youth programs often comes with heavy strings attached: accountability demands. While accountability has always been an issue for organizations and programs that serve youth, the nature of this accountability has changed. Today, individual programs have to show that what they are doing is producing important youth outcomes. This is very different from the more general question, "do we know *in principle* that this intervention works," that dominated the field of program evaluation in the past.

In recent situations, randomized trials can and have been used to make the case for success. The Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters is one example—P/PV showed that mentoring can make a difference and it is an activity that can occur in lots of organizational settings. There were programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters that were shown to be successful through these research methods, but there were also lots of program evaluation failures due to the difficulties of doing high quality randomized trial studies in this field. Often the programs were evaluated before they had been well-implemented. In addition, the voluntary nature of participation in such programs makes controlling the exposure to the program very difficult. Consequently even large-scale, well-designed randomized trials often ended up showing very small effects.

There is a need to think about what evidence is most compelling and necessary in an era when individual programs must show that they produce important results for children and youth.

Even though randomized trials are the most scientifically rigorous way to demonstrate this, such studies are often not feasible. And the results from such studies, when they are not done appropriately, can be very misleading.

Whether these types of experimental studies help identify the best programs for youth is also a compelling question. Based on the work of Milbrey McLaughlin at Stanford University, it follows developmental theory perfectly that programs that are likely to be most attractive to youth—and to have the most positive results for youth—are programs that change over time, that accommodate the kids, and that are co-constructed by the kids and the adults in that setting. Programs like these are also heavily dependent upon charismatic individuals who care a lot about the kids. Elements that make programs great, such as charismatic staff, are impossible to study with a randomized design since the "it" is not clear and unchanging; the "it" is really an evolving relationship between all the participants in the program.

The Role of Developmental Research

So, where does that leave an organization that has to be accountable? I think program staff need to be very thoughtful about what they think they're affecting. They need to lay out the theory that underlies their programs and they've got to measure and monitor all of the aspects of their program they believe are important over time, along with carefully measuring the adolescent "outcomes" they think their program is affecting.

The theory they lay out could come from various places. It could be based on other models of similar programs. It could be organic, deriving from the thinking and unique approaches or populations of the program itself. It could come from research.

This is where collaboration among developmental researchers and practitioners can be so productive. If a program is hoping to demonstrate that it did something, it has to have a very solid theory behind it. The field is young enough that we're still working out the models of change. We need to consider and evaluate as many of these models as possible. We need to be thinking broadly about what experiences are important for youth, and why. What outcomes would come from those experiences, and how can we measure those outcomes? The next step is to put these models and measures in place for programs.

This exchange could play out in several ways. Program people could identify the things they would like to give youth: "well, I think it'd be nice to give my kids X, Y and Z experiences, because... these experiences ought to produce change on X, Y and Z indicators of well-being." Or, "I would like my kids to be A, B, C and D. How do I get them there?"

Another important piece in this process includes deliberating and reflecting on information gathered as a means of continuous improvement. Reflective practice means that organizations are constantly measuring what they are providing *as well as* what they think they will affect. It is important to realize that programs are continually changing; they are not static. It is not possible to evaluate them, show they work and consider it done. It is important to invest in putting into place a whole system of systematic monitoring. Documenting everything from who participates and who doesn't to what participation means and what happens to those who participate.

The other challenge, or course, is that of determining the most appropriate level of expected and measured outcomes. A program that only deals with 100 kids should not be responsible for moving the whole community. If communities want to move massively, they need to think at the community level about the array of programs that are available for their youth. At the community level, it seems the model should be working together to put in place a wide range of programs that will meet those needs, holding the individual programs accountable for reflective practice, and then, monitoring at the community level to determine if trends change over time.

Support Through Systems

We, as developmental researchers, evaluators, program practitioners and stakeholders interested in youth-serving programs, need to think systemically and creatively about how to best support this. This system would insist that people who have the research expertise participate as partners in the creation of the larger of these model programs. The hope is that these models will then filter down to the more "mom and pop" small community programs. It is important, too, to create good, easy-to-administer measures and provide workshops and on-the-job training for those who administer programs.

The model of the Land Grant colleges is a wonderful model of research-practice collaboration. The extension programs in such colleges provide staff who go out to communities and help communities think about their needs and about the type of research needed to find answers that will help the community solve their problems. There's no reason that Land Grant colleges and other colleges can't follow this model of university-community collaboration to help in the youth development field. There are some that are, through their 4-H outreach programs and other cooperative extension programs— for example Steve Small at the University of Wisconsin and Dale Blyth at the University of Minnesota. Other non-profit organizations such as The Search Institute and Public/Private Ventures and researchers and practitioners like James Connell and Michelle Gambone, Karen Pittman and Shirley Brice-Heath are working on models of positive youth development through research-practice collaboratives.

I am very excited about the emergence of such research-practice collaborative efforts. We are at a unique juncture in our deliberations about out-of-school time. Politicians, practitioners, educators, employers, academics, parents and citizens have all become interested in youth and how to best provide them with the experiences they need to have a productive and safe adolescence as well as to grow into productive, responsible adult citizens. The time is right to bring these groups together to design and then study the kinds of programs that will provide these experiences. ■

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CORAL: A Multi-Site Initiative to Improve Academic Achievement and Build Community Capacity

The Initiative

Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) is a 10-year initiative to improve academic achievement through out-of-school activities. Funded by the James Irvine Foundation (the Foundation), CORAL is designed to build the capacity of communities to design and provide high quality programs. CORAL seeks to help communities view academic achievement as the shared responsibility of multiple sectors of the community including business, media, public and private agencies, higher education and the faith community. SRI International, a private research firm, is working with the Foundation to design and conduct the evaluation of CORAL.

Five communities in California are participating in the initiative. These communities receive financial and technical assistance from the Foundation for a pre-planning and planning phase. Funding is given to a lead agency to oversee the planning process, which involves broad representation across the community. Implementation grants that support CORAL activities for five- to seven-years are made following a successful planning period. The target age groups for CORAL programs are kindergarten through grade 8, although communities are also expected to provide some programming for high school aged youth. The communities are being phased in over several years, with the first implementation in fall of 2000.

CORAL seeks to help communities view academic achievement as the shared responsibility of multiple sectors of the community including business, media, public and private agencies, higher education and the faith community.

The Evaluation

The evaluation of CORAL is based on a theory of change that was developed over a six-month period through discussions with Foundation staff and consultants, including the evaluation team. The theory of change identifies improved academic achievement as the long term outcome of CORAL. The theory also identifies the coordination of providing agencies and the broad support of communities for academic achievement, out-of-school activities, and CORAL as two critical mechanisms leading to the provision of high quality out-of-school programs. Interim outcomes include children and families having knowledge and access to CORAL programs and children and families using the programs.

The evaluation will address research questions in five areas: implementation, utilization, child and family outcomes, contextual factors and sustainability. The design includes both cross-community and community-specific components, with data for each community analyzed separately and then analyzed across the communities to portray the overall initiative. Communities also have the opportunity to adapt or individualize the evaluation design to include issues unique to their community.

In the evaluation, SRI will use a variety of data collection methods including both quantitative and qualitative measures. In order to understand issues that affect implementation, evaluators will interview participants of the governing coalition, program directors, and school administrators, conduct staff surveys and review written documentation. An important source of implementation data will be structured on-site observations and curriculum reviews. This observation and review process will provide important feedback to the program and data for the evaluation. It will be conducted by a team of representatives including, for example, staff from the program being reviewed, another program, the lead agency and the evaluation team.

One of the major data collection sources for information related to utilization will be the CORAL management information system (MIS). An MIS is being developed to assist CORAL communities to enter and store information about enrollment and participation in CORAL activities. Several options, such as a "card swipe" system, are being explored as possible ways to track participation. The CORAL MIS will produce a variety of reports for the program and the lead agency and it will provide a wealth of data for the evaluation.

The measurement of academic achievement was one of the most critical and challenging facets of the evaluation design. Much discussion during the development of the theory of change and the evaluation focused on what is meant by academic achievement in the context of CORAL. Is it having the knowledge and skills to succeed in school? Is it actually succeeding in school? What is success in a school setting? Since CORAL programs rely on project-based learning and innovative uses of technology, it is conceivable that children could succeed in the out of school setting and yet still perform poorly in school. A clear consensus emerged from discussions among the Foundation and the communities that academic achievement should not only be defined as scores on standardized tests. Scores on tests being administered as part of the California educational accountability system will be included as one outcome measure, but so will grades, teacher ratings, program staff ratings, self-ratings by the child, parent ratings, promotion to next grade level, referrals for special services, school attendance, disciplinary actions and possibly individually administered assessments of reading and mathematics. The ideal outcome is that children will see themselves and be seen by others as successful learners both in school and out-of-school. By measuring academic achievement with multiple measures from multiple perspectives, the evaluation will be able to examine how many children partially or completely achieve this ideal.

The voices of parents are also critical to the evaluation. Communities are expected to vary in the extent to which they develop programs targeted directly for parents (for example English language classes or parent support programs). The theory of change stipulates that CORAL will ultimately contribute to parents becoming better advocates for their children in a school setting. Parent surveys and focus groups will be an important source of information about how parents perceive the impact of CORAL on their child's and family's life. The family perspective on CORAL will also be explored in-depth through case studies of participating children in each community.

As mentioned, CORAL is intended to impact communities by strengthening the organizational capacity of participating organizations, including the lead agency. One aspect of organizational capacity building is the ability to use information to make decisions and to improve performance. The evaluation has been designed so it can provide information useful to both the communities and the Foundation. The evaluation team at SRI remains committed to infusing the community-based philosophy of CORAL throughout the evaluation design, data collection and reporting processes. Exactly what this means in practice is being constructed each day as the evaluation moves from design to implementation. ■

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National Evaluation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers

In any field, large, nationally implemented programs are faced with the challenge of demonstrating the effectiveness of a program model implemented in multiple locations with inherently different key elements. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the C.S. Mott Foundation (Mott) face this challenge with the implementation of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Program. Through an evaluation design that is as complex and multifaceted as the program it aims to evaluate, the ED and Mott hope to gather evidence on whether these 21st CCLC programs improved student performance and behavior in and out of school.

The Scope of the Program

The 21st CCLC Program, authorized under the Federal Elementary and Secondary School Act, provides expanded learning opportunities for participating children in a supervised, safe environment through grants to local education agencies. Administered by the ED, in collaboration with other public and nonprofit agencies, the program involves about 3,600 rural and inner-city public schools in 903 communities. Federal support for the program has grown from $40 million in fiscal year 1998 to an appropriation of $846 million in fiscal year 2001.

Mott complements the work of the ED by providing technical assistance support to help grantees develop, implement and sustain high-quality after school programs; building public will for after school programs; and supporting evaluation and research work in the field.

The Scope of the Evaluation

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (Mathematica) contracted with the ED to conduct an evaluation of both the impact and implementation of the 21st CCLC Program. In addition, Mathematica received a grant from Mott to supplement both of the ED-funded studies—impact and implementation—as well as to conduct a series of special studies that will further explore issues related to after school program access, services and best practices. Together, Mott and ED are committed to obtaining credible evidence that these programs result in improved student performance and behaviors in and out of school.

Both the ED core studies and the Mott enhancements will rely on qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. The impact study will include experimental and quasi-experimental design components, randomly sampling programs that have been implemented in the original 21st CCLC grant. The implementation study will focus on understanding the ways in which 21st CCLC programs were, in actuality, implemented. Underlying the overall evaluation plan is a logic model that lays out the five main topical areas that are central to the evaluation: (A) the context in which each after school program operates; (B) implementation of the after school program; (C) family, individual and community conditioning factors that affect (D and E) students' intermediate and long-term outcomes.

Evaluation Design

Impact Study. The impact study will investigate the conditioning factors, intermediate effects and long-term effects of 21st CCLC programs that were implemented as intended.

The ED-funded component of the study will include two distinct designs, one targeting elementary school children and another, middle school children. The Mott-funded enhancement to the impact study will add up to 10 additional sites representing programs considered to be of "high quality" in order to learn more about how quality features can be developed.

Data will be collected through surveys, student records and

reading achievement tests.

Mott also is considering a longitudinal component to the impact study that will provide important information about the long-term effects of after school program participation on outcomes such as course-taking and behavior in high school, high school completion and expectations and plans for post-secondary education.

Implementation Study. The ED-funded implementation study will examine the components of 21st CCLC programs as well as student experiences and patterns of participation. This study is meant to understand what programs look like, as implemented, documenting adjustments that have been made to the 21st CCLC model and contextual factors that promote or detract from successful implementation. The study will include 30 middle school sites and up to 20 elementary school sites and focus on gaining an in-depth understanding of a range of key implementation components.

Data will be collected through interviews, focus groups, observations and document review during two visits to each site.

The Mott-funded enhancement of the implementation study consists of in-depth analysis of up to 10 additional sites, documenting how programs foster developmentally appropriate youth outcomes, implement strong community partnerships, create and sustain parent involvement and what contributes to overall program quality.

Study of After School Time Use. Deborah Vandell and Associates at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are conducting this Mott-funded special study. Designed to supplement the national impact and implementation studies, this study will examine student experiences in after school programs and student engagement in program activities.

Using a technique called experience sampling, students in the study will be given "wrist watches" that are programmed to beep 15 times over a five-day period. When beeped, students will record information about where they are, who they are with, what activities they are involved in, their level of involvement or engagement and their affect or emotion.

Surveys of Program Participants and Nonparticipants. Surveys geared toward documenting programs' effects on participants will be administered to students in all of the Mott middle school sites in the national study as well as 1,000 nonparticipating students at Mott middle school sites.

Surveys of Principals and Program Staff. To complement the implementation study, surveys of principals and staff in the Mott middle school and elementary school sites will provide information about how these key actors in after school programs conduct their roles, tap resources, and coordinate regular and after school programs.

Study of Other Mature After School Programs (non-21st CCLC). This study, conducted by Policy Studies Associates, will examine the activities and experiences of after school programs not funded by the 21st CCLC program in order to provide an opportunity to learn about and promote practices that may benefit and help sustain 21st CCLC programs.

The national 21st CCLC evaluation represents a unique public-private partnership and commitment to ensuring that as much as possible is learned from the program and that these learnings will contribute to more effective, accessible and sustainable after school programs nationwide. ■

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For more information about the evaluation, please contact Mark Dynarski at 609-275-2397 (e-mail mdynarski@mathematica-mpr.com) *Reports describing the study's design can be downloaded at* http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/3rdLevel/21stcentblurb.htm

> beyond basic training: TEXAS

In 1999, the **Texas After School Initiative for Middle Schools** (TASIMS) was started to serve students age 10 to 14 at risk of academic failure and/or juvenile delinquency. Administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the goals of this initiative are to increase participants' academic achievement, reduce referrals to the juvenile justice system and increase involvement of parents and/or mentors. School districts are required to evaluate the implementation of their programs using formative and summative components. They are also required to submit a report to the TEA demonstrating that their programs have an academic-based curriculum, a character/citizenship component, involve parents and mentors and supplement rather than supplant existing programs or funds. Additional reporting requirements may include assisting in establishing equity of experience and opportunity for students, creating opportunities to build capacity for leadership in students of middle school age, establishing a safe place for students to gather and take part in a program designed to meet their needs and creating an environment in which students develop interests and abilities that assist in reducing the aggregate dropout rate. The statewide evaluation of TASIMS is in progress.

A conversation with Jane Quinn

Jane Quinn has been working for the past three decades to improve the quality of youth development programs and services and to increase access to them in low-income communities. A practitioner and author, Jane has played an integral role in helping to shape policies and programs in the out-of-school time field. Prior to her current position as Assistant Executive Director for Community Schools Partnerships at the Children's Aid Society in New York, Jane was Program Director for the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Fund. She also was principal author of "A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours," a national report prepared by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. Jane spoke with us about how the after school field has evolved since this report came out in 1992 and what she thinks the future holds.

Q What was the thinking behind the Carnegie Corporation's development of *A Matter of Time* report?

A When designing *A Matter of Time* our goal was to give it a policy hook, and I think in large part we were successful. There were a lot of options for what approach to take, and it took us a while to even define the universe we were going to study and to set some fences around it. From its inception, however, we wanted it to be a study about the factors that influence and support healthy adolescent development.

Our challenge was how to get this notion to resonate with policy makers and the public. We had been talking to people about promoting kids' normal socialization and their healthy development. These were issues that the public understood, but we thought the information was going to put people to sleep because what we were trying to get at was so basic. We were also looking at community-based organizations and we knew that doing so was not going to resonate very strongly with policy makers. One option we considered was to take the risk and prevention angle, which is a valid argument, but we were really trying to make another point, about promoting opportunity for youth. Therefore, the Carnegie task force—including members of the Child Welfare League of America, Catholic Charities USA, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and public officials—and I discussed how we could present the research to policy makers and the public in a way that would engage them. And that's how we arrived at the issue of time. It took us several months to come up with that angle, but once we did, everybody was really happy with it.

I think the best evaluations are done by people who really know how to listen to practitioners, and who see themselves as having a role in informing practice. Therefore, this notion of having "a foot in both the library and the street" is really tremendously important, and it's the stance that all of us need to take.

Q Since that time, in what ways do you think the after school field has changed?

A During the period that we were producing *A Matter of Time*, the out-of-school time field was an under-studied, untapped, but fertile field for researchers. I think there has been a lot of good news in the research since *A Matter of Time* was published in December 1992. For instance, the 1994 evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities Program showed a host of positive results and its approach is very consistent with the core components of a positive youth development program: academic enrichment and remediation, community service, academic and career counseling, adult mentors and positive peer relationships. That study showed what can happen when you put all the pieces together for a very high-risk population. Another example is the 1995 study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters by Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) that received a lot of visibility and helped put mentoring on the map.

There's another, very different kind of study that was conducted by Public/Private Ventures, entitled *Safe Havens*. In this study, P/PV found that selected affiliates of three national youth organizations—Boys and Girls Clubs of America, Girls, Inc. and the YMCA—offered young people the kinds of experiences that are known to foster positive growth across different developmental domains. In an era where people are becoming fixated on very narrow dimensions of children's cognitive development, these programs are demonstrating that you can address multiple domains.

Another tremendously important line of research is found in the studies by Deborah Vandell which document the positive benefits of children's participation in high quality after school programs. These benefits include better grades, work habits, emotional adjustment and peer relations. These are all outcomes that society cares a great deal about and we have to keep talking about them because, in our heart of hearts, we all know it is not just about grades. It is also about work habits, emotional adjustment and human relationships.

Another landmark study is *Community Counts* by Milbrey McLaughlin. Its design is unique in that the authors started with kids as key informants, and asked them "lead us to the places in your communities that you think are good for kids." From there, they assessed what kids who participate regularly and are deeply engaged get out of those experiences. Participation and engagement are important issues because development is an ongoing process, and dosage makes a difference in development.

All of these studies are looking at multiple outcomes that matter. None of the outcomes are inconsequential. However, they are not the narrow ones that schools and policy makers are increasingly fixated on. There is no question that these are important outcomes, but they are not the only ones to measure.

Another important thing about these studies is that they all have shown that multiple positive benefits are predicated on quality. We cannot assume that multiple, positive benefits are just going to happen: we have to really invest in quality.

Q Where do we go from here?

A I think one of our greatest challenges is consistently applying what we already know. For example, the issue of access in out-of-school time is huge, and I don't think we as a society are paying enough attention to it. It is very important to acknowledge the fact that poor kids are much more likely to go to schools with uncertified teachers, watered-down curricula, in violent and unsafe neighborhoods and are much less likely to have access to enriching experiences or safe places in the non-school hours and to have access to everything that makes a difference in helping them achieve productive adulthood.

Q How can we get what we know about the importance of after school into the "water supply" of public ideas?

A I think people of good will have to keep talking about what we know. They really have to focus on this construct of children's learning and development, and then apply what is known. There are a lot of very smart, reasonable people all saying the same thing.

The public plays an important role in this, and that's why I was so thrilled to see the C.S. Mott Foundation poll on after school because it contained information that the public understands and can relate to. When the Carnegie Corporation put *A Matter of Time* out, not everyone was quite ready for it. Janet Reno took to it right away, as did a lot of the public, but the media wasn't quite as enamored because it wasn't dramatic. We made a conscious choice to not tie it to the crime rates, even though there is a case to be made for that approach. There have been numerous events since then that have helped to get these ideas into the water supply. Certainly the changes in the welfare laws have something to do with it. People's belated understanding of what was being said in *A Nation at Risk* contributed too. Public awareness of several issues is now converging in the out-of-school time field: many children in this country are not learning what they need to learn and are not developing the skills that they need to develop; parents need child care; and the juvenile crime and victimization rate rises after school. I think another factor that's helping us is that there are more women in elected leadership positions, and they understand this.

Q Increasingly, people are realizing that to effect real change at multiple levels, it is necessary to break down the barriers that often separate policy makers, practitioners and researchers. In the past you have quoted Jane Addams as saying "effective social workers should keep one foot in the library and one foot in the street." What does this quote mean to you?

A She saw herself as a change agent. She didn't see herself only as a practitioner, or only as a researcher, or only as a policy maker, although she was all three things. She was talking about a different way of thinking about your role as a person, as a professional. One of the things I really love about that quote, is its notion of balance. There's an intentionality in her thinking that we all need to have. The notion of being able to move from one world to another, and to bridge one world to the other, is what everybody should do.

Q What does that mean for an evaluator or researcher?

A First of all, some of it has to do with "what's their training? What discipline are they coming from?" The evaluators that I have worked with come from many different disciplines and I think that's a strength. What is underlying a lot of the tension is a sense that somehow, evaluation is a higher calling than practice or that policy making is a higher calling. I don't view it that way. Rather, I view it as kind of a partnership. Some of the best evaluations that I have seen have been very deliberate in thinking about their relevance to policy. For instance they ask, "if this intervention works, what are we going to do with the results?" I think the best evaluations are done by people who really know how to listen to practitioners, and who see themselves as having a role in informing practice. Therefore, this notion of having "a foot in both the library and the street" is really tremendously important, and it's the stance that all of us need to take. It isn't just advice for social workers.

The Carnegie Corporation has been terrific about bringing organizations together. We were very intentional in putting together the task force for *A Matter of Time*, to make sure that we had practitioners, researchers and policy makers represented in that group. People kept commenting how unusual that was, to have that experience of working together over a long period of time, to think a problem through together and to bring the different perspectives to bear on that. There really are very few forums for this way of working. I think we're so specialized that when we go to professional conferences we talk to ourselves. We have to be planful because this change in operations is not going to happen by itself. We have to ask policy makers, "what is it you need to know to make good policy?" I don't think that's happening very often.

Q As you've said, there is currently great pressure for after school programs to show academic outcomes. Do you think there is a way to balance the things programs are accountable for, with a realism about what these programs can really do?

A If we go back to basic constructs such as "what do we know about children's growth and development? What do we know about children's learning and development?" and build out from there, we're going to be okay. That's where I think developmental research is so helpful because we know about the tasks, the strengths, and the needs at various stages. We can go back to what we know, and we all have to be honest, if not modest, about the issue of what our core competencies are and be careful not to over promise, not to take on tasks that we are not qualified to take on.

But I think it's also really important to look at the balance in our out-of-school time programs, around a whole set of issues that influence children's learning and development, and not to forget the *development* part of it. Out-of-school time provides a great opportunity to work on kids' excitement about and engagement in learning, while we and schools are paying attention to the inter-relatedness of the multiple domains of development. Otherwise we are not really doing our job. ■

Pizza, Transportation and Transformation: Youth Involvement in Evaluation and Research

"A lot of times adults think, oh, it's a teenager, they're just gonna come in here and be loud and obnoxious and annoying. And, a lot of times we're not. We can make differences and we can make decisions and we can do good things. Our whole goal was, we're gonna go out there and we're gonna show people that we can do positive things." *[young person describing her research project]*

How can after school programs attract older youth and keep them interested enough to come back? Program models and activities that work well with younger kids may flop with older youth who are becoming accustomed to making their own decisions, determining their own direction and priorities and looking to effect change in their own lives and communities. Competing with the benefits that even the most tedious teen jobs can offer—the money and the opportunity to take on new responsibilities and meet new people—is a major challenge for after school programs that are interested in providing services for older youth.

To address these challenges, a growing number of after school and other youth development programs are trying a new strategy to engage older youth: they are involving them in research and evaluation projects related to the design and implementation of youth programming.

This article is based on focus groups and individual interviews that Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) staff conducted with adults and youth involved in youth-led evaluation and research projects around the country. The goals of HFRP's research were to learn more about what it means to involve youth in evaluation and research and to compile some lessons for others. The HFRP team conducted 4 adult focus groups with 3-5 participants each (a total of 15 participants), several individual interviews, and 3 youth focus groups, with 3-4 participants each (for a total of 10 participants).

What does youth involvement look like?

Based on what we heard from focus group participants—youth and adults—there seems to be no "typical" evaluation or research project that involves youth. Most of those we talked to grounded their work in youth development practices that are assets-based, incorporating a positive youth development focus within the context of evaluation and research work. They mentioned different frameworks for this work, including: youth development, risk and prevention, participatory action research, community development and empowerment evaluation. Those who engage in this work focus on establishing youth as partners or leaders in the research and evaluation endeavor, involving youth in determining the right questions to ask, designing and conducting the study and engaging with the community and other decision-makers in a discussion of findings and action steps.

The fourteen organizations represented by the individuals in our focus group discussions include: schools; nonprofit institutions, including youth development agencies and research organizations; and universities in rural, urban, and suburban areas of the U.S. and Canada. They involve youth in a range of activities, including community mapping, evaluation of programs and services, community-based strategic planning, education and advocacy and social change projects in areas such as the environment, health, and safety. Adults who work with youth in these research and evaluation efforts include volunteers and paid staff, community members, community-based and university researchers and evaluators, local graduate and undergraduate students and experts in different areas of inquiry. Youth from the organizations represented in our focus groups ranged from elementary school age to high school graduates and college students, as well as high school dropouts, and they come from a variety of educational, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities.

Among the youth who participated in our focus groups, several participated in the evaluation of after school programs and organizations, community service projects and drop-in centers for street youth. Some led participatory action research projects on issues of concern to youth and their communities, such as youth health behaviors, immigration, youth violence, school drop-outs and the environment. Youth indicated that they have been involved at all levels and stages: designing research projects; identifying research questions; creating data collection instruments (surveys and interview guides); collecting information; analyzing data; presenting information; and making recommendations for change. Some specific results of their work include: managing an adult-youth coffee house and "rap sessions;" creating a video project for teens about violence and substance abuse; producing a booklet on high-school dropouts; and bringing valuable jobs and positive activities for youth to the community by establishing an after school program.

What are the benefits of youth involvement?

According to those in our focus groups, youth involvement in research and evaluation offers benefits to youth as well as to adults, programs, organizations, and communities. Benefits mentioned by youth included developing healthy relationships with mentors and peers, gaining valuable skills and making a positive impact on their community.

Adults in the group talked about how they benefit from the renewed energy and enthusiasm youth bring to the projects. Some adult focus group participants reported that youths' lack of cynicism and altruistic motivations were an inspiration to the adults around them.

From the program perspective, adults in our focus groups suggested that youth involvement can mean better research and evaluation. Adult focus group members observed that some audiences view reports *about* youth that are done *by* youth as more legitimate and much more interesting. Focus group participants suggested that young people offer fresh perspectives and new insights into data collection and analysis, and that working with youth can help adults better understand youth, thus changing perceptions and leading to greater mutual trust and respect.

Focus group members suggested that research and evaluation work provides the opportunity for youth to play a public role in the community, and in this way, youth are able to demonstrate a more positive image.

What are some of the challenges to involving youth in research and evaluation projects?

Clarifying the goals of the project. Those embarking on this work are sometimes faced with the challenge of balancing multiple goals: fostering youth development and empowerment, producing a high quality product that meets rigorous standards for research and evaluation, and effecting community change. How these are balanced affects how a

project is set up, who gets involved and when, how much structure is necessary, what supports are used and even which and how funding sources are identified and approached.

Readiness. Focus group members stressed that youth involvement is not for everyone. Adult study participants spoke about three forms of readiness: organizational readiness (is the organization one in which youth-led evaluation and research can work?); adult readiness (are the adults who will be working with the youth ready to engage in this type of a partnership?); and community readiness (is the community on board with this work and a new way to think about youth and their contribution?).

Readiness, participants stressed, is also not an all-or-nothing proposition. Some observed that one of the most effective approaches to youth-involved research and evaluation is a gradual one. Youth in Focus (formerly Community LORE), a technical assistance organization in Oakland, CA, has a model to help organizations locate where they are along a continuum of youth involvement. The point is that while youth involvement does require a fundamental paradigm shift, not everyone needs to *begin* by doing it comprehensively. In the same way that activities need to be developmentally appropriate for youth, the work needs to be developmentally appropriate for the organization undertaking it.

From the youth perspective, the challenge is preparing adults to work with youth in a different way than they may be used to. Adult participants admitted that staff need to be ready to work in honest partnership with youth—truly cooperating, and allowing youth to lead. One youth advised, "[adults] have to be ready to hear what the youth have to say. And it's not always what adults expect. So if you can, keep an open mind, and [go] in there to learn something and [be] honestly ready to learn something from youth..."

Training and support for youth. Providing the right training and support to staff and youth is, according to our focus group participants, absolutely critical to the success of youth research and evaluation activities. The critical challenge is how much structure and support to provide throughout the course of the project and how to make the project meet the skill levels of the youth.

Overcoming "Adultism." Fighting adult perceptions of youth—what one group referred to as "adultism"—is one of the major challenges cited by both adults and youth. Youth often feel they don't have representation; adults who work with youth can inadvertently reinforce this by making decisions for youth and overlooking their input. They can also do this by using technical jargon that is unfamiliar to youth. For many youth, the opportunity to change adults' images of youth is an important motivating factor for participation in these projects. Those involved in these projects must make sure that these opportunities exist.

What makes youth involvement successful?

Link research and evaluation to action and change. For youth focus group members, the most common motivator for involvement in research and evaluation was the ability to use research and evaluation as a vehicle for change. These youth were not satisfied with a report to a funder that sits on the shelf; they needed to see the results of their work in tangible, immediate and important ways, either through program changes or the fact that others were willing to listen and consider what youth had to say. As one youth noted, "we saw results and it [gave us] such a feeling of like, 'oooh!' It inspires you to do more. And it makes you feel like you can take on the world and just fix everything!"

Compensate for work. Many focus group members stressed the importance of providing youth with rewards and validation for their work. This validation can take the form of: monetary compensation, a concrete product, utilization of results, presentation of findings to various audiences, travel to present or collect data and work with others, making an impact in the community. Monetary compensation can be key for youth that have financial need, or whose parents want them to have a job. Youth also cited the opportunity to gain skills, both practical and personal, as a form of compensation. Youth expressed a desire to be part of something bigger than themselves, and found that evidence of their impact inspired them to want to do more.

Make it more than evaluation and research. Youth and adult focus group members also cited the importance of making the experience of these projects be more than the "work" of research and evaluation. Youth members stressed the value of developing close relationships with peers and adults. Both adults and youth observed that these relationships extended far beyond the bounds of the research or evaluation endeavor including, for example, attending youths' sports games and recitals and getting to know parents. As one youth noted, "[a] reason why I think [our director] is so successful in what he does is he's not afraid to get involved with our lives."

Provide food and transportation. Adults agreed that the two main secrets to sustaining youth participation are to provide them with transportation and lots of food. Youth cannot participate if they cannot get there, and they will not be productive if they are hungry.

This article is a shortened version of a soon-to-be published working paper on youth involvement in research and evaluation.

Jennifer C. Smith, Senior Research Assistant, HFRP

> beyond basic training: CALIFORNIA

California established the **After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program** (ASLSNPP) in 1998 to provide a safe environment after school for students in grades K-9. To achieve these goals, each program must have an academic achievement component and provide safe and healthy environments. Programs operate at schools for at least three hours until at least 6:00 p.m. on every regular school day. The California Department of Education (CDE), in partnership with the Foundation Consortium, is providing training and technical assistance to programs. CDE requires both site-based and program-wide outcome assessments. Program evaluations must measure progress in meeting goals, and must include indicators for: achievement of academic performance standards, attendance, positive behavior changes and school safety. The evaluation must be linked to collaborative partners, be integrated with existing program evaluations and include a plan for continuous improvement.

All For Our Future

We know that each of us is in control of ourselves and what we do, but have you ever felt like what you did was wrong or what you said was useless? Through our work we have discovered that this is the way most youth feel every time they try to make a change in their community. Too many adults in the community overlook the youth. "So what?" they'd say, "Who Cares?" or even "What do you know?" Confronted by these demoralizing questions many youth give up. We knew we had to change the perception of youth, but how?

The answer was presented to us. The local community organization (Compañeros; Douglas, AZ) with which we worked, presented us with a project. We could do whatever we wanted with the stipulation that it had to be done with the organization's sister partnerships (Juntos Unidos; Nogales, AZ and Puentes de Amistad; Yuma, AZ), both of which are located on the Arizona/Mexico border.

Within a week, youth from the three sister organizations were all brought together in a central location. The youth from each group stuck to their own and didn't talk to each other. When words did start flying we were surprised to hear that we have a lot of similar problems. We knew that we wanted to make a change, but how? We brainstormed and came to a conclusion—How could we begin to make change without knowing what the youth wanted? We decided that a youth survey would best fit our needs.

Within a month we were on our way to determining what needed to be addressed. After some training on how to write a survey, we wrote questions addressing the problems we discussed at the first meeting. In no time the survey was finished. It consisted of 25 quantitative and qualitative questions covering issues affecting border teens today. From pollution to teen pregnancy, from our perspective, the survey covered it all and in two languages (Spanish/English). Now the hard part was over! Or was it?

Now that the survey was written, we had to administer it. This step proved to be more trying than we originally thought. It was decided that the survey would be disseminated to teens within the local middle schools and high schools. Resistance from school administration made this step more difficult than we thought it really should have been. Eventually our persistence paid off; the survey was given out to students ages 11-18 in four border communities in Arizona: Douglas, Naco/Bisbee, Nogales and Yuma.

Once the surveys were completed, we got together once again. We had approximately 1,500 surveys completed, and the question was what to do with them. The experts from the University of Arizona Rural Health Office trained us to input the data into the computer, using Excel to capture the data. This proved to be a long tedious task. Back home, we spent hour after hour inputting these data, and most of us gave up our summers and some activities in order to do this. Finally we were done.

Once again, we came together to receive more training. Collecting the data was one thing, interpreting it was another. The analysis of our survey proved to be both fun and exhausting. We discovered that although most youth agreed that we had problems, the priorities were much different. As we graphed the results, new ideas kept coming to our minds.

As we were completing our analysis, we received an invitation from the National Hispanic/Latino Prevention Cluster Conference to present our results. We quickly accepted the invitation. The fact that the conference was in Boston, Massachusetts weighed heavily on our decision. We were going to be the first youth group ever to present at the conference and we felt that this would be a giant step forward for youth.

So there we were, once again walking into a room of doubting adults. This was our chance to prove not only to our community, but also to adults all over the country, that youth can make a difference. We were extremely nervous, but we had a strong presentation ready. After giving up our jitters, we gave our presentation. At the end there was a long eerie silence. A clap finally broke the silence and that clap turned into many. Before we knew it the room was filled with the sound of a standing ovation.

After the applause died down, we were overwhelmed with questions about how to get other youth involved in their communities and most importantly, they wanted our opinions on real issues and problems. We couldn't believe that they wanted our opinions. It was a milestone in our struggle for a voice in our communities.

We were glad our hard work came in handy. After the survey we put the results to work. One big concern the youth who answered the survey had was lack of education. Not of math and science but of issues and situations they faced each and every day. This resulted in a presentation at the Compañeros Youth Council's Annual "Youth Learning to Lead the Future Conference." Yes, this was more work, but we feel that if youth are the future, they must have a voice in the present. ■

Luis Carlos Greer, Tamara Martinez

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The **Afterschool Alliance** is continuing to work toward ensuring that, by the year 2010, every child has access to high-quality, affordable after school programs. Their coalition of public, private, and nonprofit organizations educates the public through awareness efforts; engages local practitioners and community residents in outreach and advocacy; and promotes investment in after school initiatives at the national, state, and local levels. The Afterschool Alliance launched a national public service announcement campaign, "What Is A Hero?" to increase awareness of the need for after school programs and to help individuals learn more about starting after school programs in their communities. Communities across the nation are urged to participate in the second annual *Lights On! Afterschool* event to be held October 11, 2001. This nationwide celebration will highlight the programs serving families and children after school. To learn more about joining the Afterschool Alliance's Afterschool Action Hero Network, or to view the "What Is a Hero?" ads, visit ***http://www.afterschoolalliance.org***

Logic Models in Real Life: After School at the YWCA of Asheville

The YWCA of Asheville, NC, is not a research organization. The shared vision that drives us is the empowerment of women and their families and the elimination of racism. We work hard every day for and with the people who walk through our doors: we teach them to swim, help them address barriers to financial self-sufficiency, care for their children and help them prepare for a brighter future. By and large, we are in the trenches and not necessarily at our desks.

We can see and feel that we are making a difference for women and families, but how can we prove it? This is the question that led the YWCA as a whole, and the after school program as a part of it, down the path toward using the logic model as an evaluation tool.

Several of the YWCA's programs receive generous support from our local United Way, which asked us to provide proof of our impact on those we serve. At the same time, our local United Way was accepted into The United Way of America's "National Learning Project on Using Program Outcomes."

The United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County participated in this national project by forming work groups of representatives from many local agencies. The people participating in these groups supported each other in developing logic models, outcome measurement frameworks and measurement tools for their agencies and programs. This process empowered the agency representatives to teach and learn from each other, thereby giving them a broad understanding of this evaluation tool and how it can be used in many different types of programs.

In the fall of 1999, we brought this working group process home to the YWCA, forming a similar study group within our organization that involved the leaders from the wide range of programs within the YWCA. The program staff met over doughnuts and coffee on a regular basis and helped each other think through the causes and effects of their programs. From this, the program staff came up with logic models to describe their programs.

Our internal study group's formation coincided with the arrival of our new school age director, who oversees both the after school and summer camp programs. Involvement in the study group gave her the opportunity to think through the programs she was taking on as she was learning about them. The process of developing logic models helped her to articulate what she wanted to accomplish with the programs, and what programmatic changes would be required in order to reach these outcomes.

In order to apply our after school program logic model in practice, we had to wrestle with some data collection challenges such as gaining access to report cards and convincing already busy counselors to track homework completion.

Like any program, we did the best we could with the information we had at hand. We got permission from parents, allowing us to collect report cards from the schools. We worked to get the counselors on board, and the go-getters got with the program. Our final data for the first round of outcomes measurement were a sampling rather than complete, but we thought it was an excellent start.

We have now had these logic models in place for half a year of after school programming and one complete summer camp season. Where are we now? What have we learned?

First, like good scouts, we have learned to BE PREPARED. We now have a report card permission slip in the enrollment packet, so we can easily collect grades from all the schools. As a part of the initial expectations for after school staff this year, we instituted daily homework logs for every group. We are trying to make outcome measurement an integral part of the program, rather than an add-on.

Second, we have become sensitive to the ways in which staffing issues affect outcome measurement. It is important to include outcome measurement discussions in the interview process, during orientation and training, and in staff meetings, to get buy-in and keep the momentum going. All staff need to understand the logic model process and the benefits of engaging in outcome measurement, whether they are the new director of school age programs or staff who have been with the program for years.

We asked ourselves this question: How can we have consistent outcome measurement with solid data, and still give the director the flexibility to adjust the program as she sees fit? Fortunately, logic models are both practical and flexible. The outcomes themselves are fairly common-sense and there is general agreement on what we want to get out of an after school program. There are many possible ways to get there, as many activities could lead to the desired outcomes. So it is easy for a new director to accept the pre-determined outcomes, but exercise her own creativity in designing activities to reach them. In this way, the program can be both fresh and consis-

> beyond basic training: MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts's After-School and Other Out-of-School-Time (ASOOST), an initiative both funded and operated by the Massachusetts Department of Education (MA DOE), provides quality before and after school, vacation and weekend programming for children and youth. Programs may provide academic support, enrichment, physical activity, community service, career exploration and health information. Grantees are required to provide data to the MA DOE on primary program activities, number of hours students attended program, content area in which students are receiving assistance, instructional model used in program and pre/post measures of academic improvement. Sites must conduct an evaluation of program implementation, achievements (including gains in children's performance, and increases in homework completion or school attendance) and satisfaction of stakeholders. The MA DOE currently contracts with training and technical assistance providers to support the implementation, development and quality enhancement of the ASOOST grant program. The MA DOE has hired an independent evaluator to assess the goods and services provided through the grants and to submit reports on program outcomes.

tent at the same time.

This practicality of the logic model is its greatest asset, not only for after school, but for the YWCA as a whole. We are busy people running licensed programs that already involve plenty of state, federal and grants-related paperwork. If we are going to design and measure anything, it had better be easy, and it had better make sense. The logic model meets both those criteria, and gives us excellent data to use for improving and marketing our programs. ■

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Logic Model Basics

A logic model is a graphic that lays out the basic components of a program, illustrating how day-to-day program activities are linked to the outcomes the program is working to achieve. The process of creating a logic model allows after school programs to think systematically about what outcomes they hope to achieve and how they plan to achieve them. As a visual, the logic model can be a powerful tool for illustrating a program's theory of change to program staff, partners, funders and evaluators. Moreover, the completed model provides a point of reference against which progress towards achievement of desired outcomes can be measured on an ongoing basis.

Step 1: The Purpose of the Logic Model

Construction and use of the logic model will differ according to the needs of individual after school programs. Purposes for logic models include:

- to structure early conversations among program stakeholders about desired outcomes and activities
- to convince funders that a program is deserving of support because it has a strategic plan for achieving the outcomes it promises
- to check that existing program activities fit "logically" with expected outcomes
- to help established programs articulate and clarify their implicit assumptions as an explicit theory of change
- a framework to guide data collection and evaluation activities

Programs should use program needs to determine the appropriate scope for the logic model. Will it focus on a specific program component or will it cover the entire program? After school programs that rely on multiple funding streams with different outcomes requirements may want to use the logic model to think about how these outcomes fit together. Or, a program may want to create a logic model focusing only on a particular outcome.

Step 2: Identifying the Components of the Logic Model

Once the appropriate scope of the model has been determined, it is possible to begin to identify its core components:

- *Inputs*: Plans made, resources used, or collaborations developed to make program implementation possible.
- *Activities*: Steps taken during implementation of program.
- *Short-term outcomes:* Measurable changes that occur as a direct result of program activities. These changes should contribute to desired long-term outcomes.
- *Long-term outcomes:* Changes in individual behavior or community conditions that a program hopes to achieve over time. Like short-term outcomes, these outcomes should be measurable, and as specific as possible.

Existing organizational documents—strategic planning documents, mission statements, grant proposals, work plans, recruitment announcements, public relations materials, training materials, or publications—can be used to identify the specific components of an after school program's work. If desired long-term outcomes have not yet been identified, the process of constructing a logic model can become an opportunity for program stakeholders to share their expectations of the program and strategically plan to meet them.

Once the core components of the model have been identified, many programs will want to add more detail to better explain the program. The following components can be added:

- *Outputs:* Goods and services generated by program activities that make short-term outcomes possible, falling between activities and short-term outcomes.
- *Contextual variables:* Factors that may or may not be under a program's control but could impact a program's implementation and or/achievement of its outcomes.
- *Intermediate outcomes:* Coming after short-term outcomes, these outcomes are important to achieve in order for long-term outcomes to be realized.
- *Impacts:* Broader-level change that a program hopes to *contribute* to through achievement of its long-term outcomes, though it is usually impossible to prove that an individual program *caused* these changes.

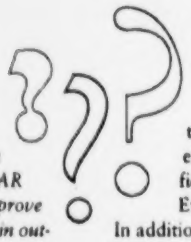
Step 3: Drafting the Logic Model Graphic

Once the purpose and components of the logic model have been decided upon, the hard part is over. Now, the logic model graphic can be made by putting program components into boxes and connecting them with arrows that show the relationships between different components. The lines of the logic model should be clean, and its content clear—abbreviations and jargon should be avoided. When a draft of the logic model has been completed, it should be circulated to different program stakeholders to review it for accuracy and readability. The draft should be revised until reviewer feedback is satisfied.

Designing a logic model is just the beginning of a process that includes data collection, evaluation and program monitoring and reporting. ■

Based on *Learning from logic models: An example of a family/school partnership program.* Julia Coffman (1999). Harvard Family Research Project. This publication is available on-line at http://www.gse. harvard.edu/~hfrp/pubs/onlinepubs/logic.pdf

JuNelle Harris, Graduate Research Assistant, HFRP



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Why evaluate after school programs?

With the recent increase in interest in children's activities during out-of-school hours, large amounts of federal funding are being directed toward after school programs. Educators, researchers, practitioners and policy makers are all interested in the impact of these dollars on the communities in which they are invested; evaluation is a necessary tool for the documentation of after school programs' impacts. Future policies regarding after school programs will be influenced not only by national research and evaluation investments; local evaluation efforts will also provide important information to inform the field.

Evaluation serves multiple purposes for after school programs. In addition to helping programs be accountable to the multiple stakeholders of the program—funders, schools, parents, student participants and communities—evaluation helps programs to strengthen themselves. Engaging in frequent, active evaluation is one way for after school programs to track progress toward goals and ensure that they are meeting the needs of communities.

New programs are often too busy getting the program off the ground to think forward to evaluation planning. What type of evaluation activities can new programs incorporate into their planning and implementation process?

In the first year of a program, it is not unrealistic for staff to spend a lot of their time developing the program's goals and creating the program. Engaging in formative evaluation from the very beginning will help to shape the outcome expectations for the program. While this type of evaluation will not immediately give "evidence of effectiveness" or other statistical outcome measures, such as means, standard deviations, and effect sizes pertaining to the impact of the program, it will provide important evaluation information to stakeholders of the after school program. Such formative information—including feedback on program structure and activities, descriptions of participant demographics, documentation of parent and student satisfaction, attendance patterns of the students and staff and descriptions of program successes and challenges—is essential to frame the outcomes evaluations to follow.

When incorporating evaluation into a program, the key to success is connecting the needs of the program to the goals of the program and eventually to the outcomes. In a logic model for the program, needs should drive goals and objectives, and those should be directly connected to expected outcomes for the program. In order to be able to make some claim of success, it is important to create an infrastructure for the evaluation, based on a solid logic model, that links activities in the program to outcomes expected for the participants.

The program planning, implementation and evaluation process benefits from a strong data collection and evaluation infrastructure. Creating an evaluation infrastructure first and foremost requires the organization, its staff and the evaluation team to commit to conducting a sound, rigorous evaluation. The evaluation infrastructure addresses not only the physical mechanisms that pertain to evaluation, such as data collection tools and evaluation personnel, but accounts for the non-tangible attitudes among stakeholders about evaluation. Points of accountability and responsibility from the participants in the program all the way to the evaluator and eventually the funders are highlighted in a comprehensive evaluation infrastructure. The evaluation infrastructure is a whole communication mechanism that exists between and among the various stakeholders involved in the program and its evaluation. For a strong infrastructure to exist, all of the stakeholders must be in agreement about the needs, goals and intended outcomes of the program. Building a data collection and evaluation infrastructure into the program from the very start creates an environment that will support effective evaluation efforts in the future. ■

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> electronic resources

InnoNet strives to build the capacity of public and non-profit agencies to improve their overall organizational learning and effectiveness. Through consultations, trainings, workshops and diagnostic tools, InnoNet assists these organizations in evaluating the services they provide. Their on-line resource center offers free information on evaluation. **http://www.innonet.org**

The **National Governors' Association** Center for Best Practices has created the first comprehensive database containing profiles of state-level extra learning opportunities. The searchable database contains profiles of 167 state-level programs in 44 states. It offers governors and other state leaders the chance to share effective practices and expand extra learning opportunities for all children. **http://www.nga.org**

The **National Institute on Out-of-School Time's** (NIOST) Cross-Cities Network brings together leaders from 25 citywide after school initiatives in major cities across the United States. The goals of this project are to increase the capacity and knowledge of high-level leaders, to improve the effectiveness of citywide after school initiatives and to contribute to the development of a coherent vision for the field at the national level. Watch their website for activities and developments. **http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/cross_cities.html**

The **Search Institute** will be holding its annual Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth Conference, November 1-3, 2001. Designed for people who work with or care about youth, this conference will bring together people from different national and international community sectors who share the common goal of working together to promote positive youth development through asset building. For more information or to register, visit: **http://www.search-institute.org**

> new & noteworthy

> *continued from page 2*

National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2001). ***Fact Sheet on School Age Children's Out-of-School Time.*** Wellesley, MA. This March 2001 update to the 2000 edition provides information on the ways children spend time after school, children's health and safety, how children benefit from high quality programs, costs of care and support for out-of-school time programs. http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/fact_sheet_01.pdf

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Richard, Mary MacDonald. (1991) ***Before and After School Programs: A Start Up and Administration Manual.*** This is a policies and procedures manual with models, applications, forms, and information about starting and running a school-age care program. It includes budgets, non-profit status, job descriptions, staff and parent handbook, and staff evaluation. Order online at: http://www.afterschool catalog.com

Sylvester, Kathleen, and Kathy Reich. (2000). ***After-School Programs, Issues & Ideas: A Guide for Journalists and Policymakers.*** Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. A companion piece to *The Future of Children* journal issue *When School Is Out* (Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1999), this publication examines issues such as: how much schooling should take place after school, whether government should pay for after school programs and if after school programs can meet expectations. Available online at http://www.futureofchildren.org/asp.pdf

U.S. Department of Education and National Endowment for the Arts. (2000). ***How the Arts Can Enhance After-School Programs.*** Washington, DC: Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. This report provides a brief introduction to the role of the arts in after school programs such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Included are a brief summary of recent research findings about arts and after school programs, a description of the key elements of successful programs and some key examples that showcase partnerships between schools and community-based organizations. For more information contact the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education at 1-800-872-5327 or email partner@ed.gov

Working for Change in Education: A Handbook for Planning Advocacy. (2000). Plymouth, United Kingdom: Save the Children UK. Non-governmental organization representatives from four continents developed the ideas for this handbook, which is a practical guide on how to advocate for education, from local through to national and international levels. The handbook offers a detailed framework for planning advocacy, alongside case studies and workshops for training or to facilitate analysis. For copies of the publication, price £7.50, please contact: Save the Children Publications, c/o Plymbridge Distributors Ltd, Estover Road, Plymouth, PL6 7PY, United Kingdom, tel+44 1752 202301, fax +44 1752 202333, or email orders@plymbridge.com. http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/functions/indx_pubs.html

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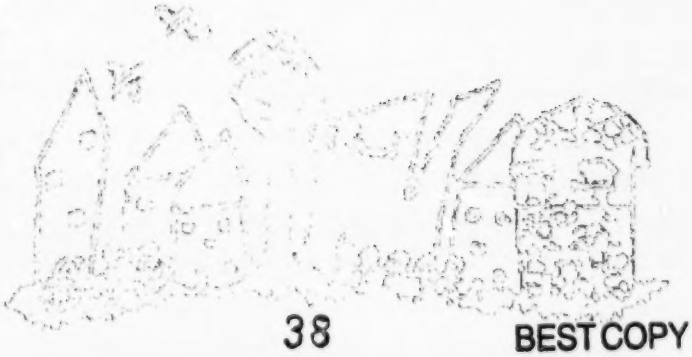

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